# CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

MONDAY • APRIL 20, 2026 • VOL: 11 • ISSUE: 275 • PAGES 12 • ₹2.00

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# US peace brokers in Pak today for talks

Trump says he is confident that US will be able to get a peace deal as Iran had committed "serious violations" during the 2-week truce

**WASHINGTON**

United States President Donald Trump confirmed on Sunday that the second round of negotiations between the US and Iran is taking place and would be held in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Trump, in a conversation with ABC's Jonathan Karl on Sunday, said he was confident that America would be able to get a peace deal, while saying that Iran had committed "serious violations" during the two-week ceasefire.

"It will happen. One way or another. The nice way or the hard way. It's going to happen. You can quote me," the president said.

"My Representatives are going to Islamabad, Pakistan. They will be there tomorrow evening, for negotiations," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

"We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it because, if they don't, the United States is going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran," he added.

**' Vice President JD Vance won't go'**

Trump also clarified that Vice President JD Vance would not be going to Pakistan after there were several contradictory reports in media.

The President further said his representatives would be in Islamabad for peace talks on Monday night, but that the Secret Service couldn't arrange to accompany Vance there on such short notice.

Earlier in the day, both the US envoy to the United Nations, Mike Waltz, and Energy Secretary Chris Wright had indicated that Vance would lead the round of negotiations in Islamabad.

**'Islamabad already starting to lock down'**

Even before President Trump's social media post, Islamabad was already starting to lock down. Guests at the hotel where the talks took place between the US and Iranian delegations last weekend were told they needed to leave, while three universities moved their classes online.

Islamabad police announced that key roads into the city may be closed due to the arrival of foreign delegations and heavy traffic is completely restricted from entering the city.

## ...renews bridge strike threat amid talk plan

**WASHINGTON**

A day after Iran opened fire at ships transiting the Hormuz, Donald Trump on Sunday described the incident as "A Total Violation of our Ceasefire Agreement!" He added, "Many of them were aimed at a French Ship, and a Freighter from the United Kingdom. That wasn't nice, was it?" Trump announced that US "representatives are going to Islamabad, Pakistan — they will be there tomorrow evening, for negotiations," while claiming that Washington is "offering a very fair and reasonable deal." He renewed his warning, saying, "I hope they take it because, if they don't, the United States is going to knock out every single power plant, and every single bridge, in Iran. NO MORE MR. NICE GUY! They'll come down fast, they'll come down easy and, if they don't take the deal, it will be my honour to do what has to be done, which should have been done to Iran by other presidents for the last 47 years," in a post on Truth Social.

# 23 KILLED IN FIRECRACKER FACTORY BLAST IN TN

**VIRUDHUNAGAR**

At least 23 people lost their lives after a massive explosion ripped through a private firecracker manufacturing unit near here, police confirmed on Sunday. Eleven others suffered serious injuries in the incident.

The blast took place at the 'Vanaja' fireworks factory, owned by Muthumanickam, located in Kattanarpatti under the Vachakarapatti police station limits.

Officials from the police and fire departments said four of the injured remain in critical condition and are undergoing treatment at the Virudhunagar Government Medical College Hospital.

Preliminary findings indicate that the unit had reportedly obtained a licence from the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), Nagpur. More than 100 workers were said to be present at the facility at the time of the explosion.

According to initial reports, the explosion is suspected to have originated in the front veranda area, where workers were handling raw materials and carrying out finishing work on firecrackers.

The force of the blast caused widespread destruction, reducing at least three rooms to debris and flattening several nearby structures. "We have recovered 18 bodies so far, many of which were charred beyond recognition," a police official said. Among the six injured, three women have reportedly sustained burn injuries covering around 60% of their bodies, the official added.

The blast occurred when about 30 workers were engaged in routine manufacturing related processes at the firecracker unit.

More than 100 workers were said to be present at the facility at the time of the explosion.

According to the sources, firefighting teams worked for several hours to control the blaze. Rescue efforts were complicated as firecrackers continued to explode intermittently even after the initial blast. Authorities fear that more workers could still be trapped beneath the rubble.

Rescue and search operations are still underway, and more details are awaited.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin expressed grief over the incident and said he had directed two ministers to immediately visit the site to oversee relief efforts.

The tragedy is being described as the deadliest industrial accident in the region this year.

It comes close on the heels of another explosion in the Vembakottai area of the same district, which claimed four lives just days ago.

## Modi playing politics over women's reservation: CM

**RANEBENNUR**

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of indulging in politics in the name of women's reservation, alleging that the Centre was more focused on electoral gains than genuine implementation.

Speaking at Ranebennur in Haveri district, Siddaramaiah said the BJP was attempting to shift blame onto the Congress for "political benefit," particularly with elections approaching in key States. He reiterated that the Congress has consistently supported women's reservation, recalling that former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had introduced 33% reservation in local bodies through constitutional amendments.

The CM questioned why the Women's Reservation Bill, passed in 2023 with overwhelming support, had not yet been implemented. "The BJP is not interested in ensuring reservation for women. Its real focus is on delimitation that serves its political interests," he alleged.

> If the number of seats increases significantly, northern states will gain more, while progressive southern states will be at a disadvantage
>
> **Siddaramaiah, CM**

Siddaramaiah also raised concerns over the proposed delimitation exercise, warning that it could disproportionately impact southern States. He argued that States like Karnataka, which have successfully stabilised population growth, may lose relative representation in Parliament compared to more populous States such as Uttar Pradesh.

"If the number of seats increases significantly, northern states will gain more, while progressive southern states will be at a disadvantage," he said, calling the move "unfair" and potentially harmful to federal balance.

He further criticised the BJP, claiming the party had no historical commitment to women's reservation and had not supported similar initiatives in the past.

## 'This is democracy, not Hitler rule': DKS

**BENGALURU**

Criticising the BJP-led Centre over the timing and handling of the Women's Reservation Amendment Bill, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said the opposition was not taken into confidence.

He also called for wider consultation in a democratic framework. "This is democracy; this is not a Hitler-style rule. They cannot bring it in the middle of elections and try to alter the entire constituencies," he said.

The Congress has consistently supported women's reservation, but objected to the manner in which the Bill was brought forward, he said, alleging that it was introduced without adequate discussion with opposition parties.

## Indian tanker passes Hormuz 'fire' test; 2 turn back

**NEW DELHI**

An Indian-flagged crude tanker passed safely through the Strait of Hormuz, while two other vessels were forced to retreat after coming under fire, leading India to raise safety concerns with Iran over merchant shipping.

Crude oil tanker Desh Garima, with 31 Indian seafarers onboard, crossed the strategic waterway on April 18 and is expected to reach Mumbai on April 22, according to an update released by the government on developments in West Asia.

Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) tanker is the 10th India-flagged vessel to have crossed the strait since early March.

In contrast, very large crude carrier Samnar Herad and bulk carrier Jag Arnav reported a firing incident while transiting the strait in the past 24 hours and returned to the Persian Gulf. No injuries were reported among the crew.

MarineTraffic data showed oil tankers Desh Vaibhav and Desh Vibhor also reversing course near the chokepoint, taking the number of India-flagged ships in the Persian Gulf to 14.

India's foreign secretary summoned Iran's ambassador in New Delhi to convey "deep concern" over the incident and underscored the importance of ensuring the safety of merchant shipping and mariners.

# Heatwave grips K'taka, temp cross 40°c in 5 districts

**BENGALURU**

Five districts in Karnataka recorded scorching temperatures above 40°C on Sunday, with no immediate relief in sight as intense summer heat continued to grip large parts of the State.

According to the India Meteorological Department, four districts in north interior Karnataka and one in the south witnessed maximum temperatures significantly above normal levels, with departures of up to 3°C.

In north interior Karnataka, Kalaburagi recorded 41.7°C, while Bidar saw a high of 41.6°C — nearly 3°C above normal. Raichur registered 41.4°C, and Koppal reported 40.4°C. Notably, the Koppal All Weather Station recorded an even higher temperature of 43.2°C, indicating severe heat conditions.

In south interior Karnataka, Ballari (Hagari KVK station) recorded 40.9°C, adding to the list of districts facing extreme temperatures. Most other regions in the state recorded maximum temperatures above 35°C, except for a few coastal and hill districts such as Chikkamagaluru, Shivamogga and Haveri, where conditions remained relatively moderate.

The IMD forecast suggests that there will be no significant drop in temperatures over the next five days. Coastal Karnataka is expected to experience hot and humid weather, while north interior regions may see isolated thunderstorms accompanied by gusty winds of 40–50 kmph and possible hailstorms between April 19 and 23.

South interior Karnataka is also likely to witness thunderstorms with wind speeds of 30–40 kmph during the same period, though temperatures are expected to remain largely unchanged.

Meanwhile, early projections indicate that the upcoming southwest monsoon may bring below-normal rainfall to most parts of Karnataka, raising concerns over water availability and agriculture in the months ahead.

**Hottest districts**

| | |
|---|---|
| 40.9°C | Ballari |
| 41.7°C | Kalaburagi |
| 41.6°C | Bidar |
| 41.7°C | Raichur |
| 40.4°C | Koppal |

**STRICT LAW ON 'BEADBI'**

## *New life sentence law for Guru Granth Sahib disrespect*

**CHANDIGARH**

Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria has given assent to the anti-sacrilege Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill 2026, with Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Sunday confirming that the legislation has now cleared the final constitutional hurdle.

With his approval, the Bill is now formally enacted, allowing the state to implement its provisions with immediate effect.

Confirming the development, Mann took to X and said, "Governor Shri Gulab Chand Kataria Ji has signed the bill passed in the Legislative Assembly against the desecration of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.. Now this bill has become law.. From a humble person like me, a billion-fold thanks to Waheguru Ji for taking this service… Gratitude."

The Bill is an amendment to the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar Act, 2008, related to sacrilege and conspiracy for sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib. It proposed stricter punishment, including life imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 25 lakh, for any act of sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib.

The Bill was unanimously passed by the Punjab Assembly on April 13 and was sent to the governor for his assent.

It aims to deter incidents of "beadbi" (sacrilege) and uphold the sanctity of the Guru Granth Sahib through enhanced penalties.

**Provisions in the bill**

Punjab's sacrilege Bill to become law soon as Guv gives nod; The new law introduces significantly harsher penalties for desecration specifically of the Guru Granth Sahib

- **Punishment:** Imprisonment ranging from 10 years to life.
- **Fines:** Financial penalties between ₹5 lakh and ₹25 lakh.
- **Conspiracy:** Acts involving a criminal conspiracy to incite communal unrest can lead to property confiscation.
- **Attempt & Abetment:** Attempting sacrilege is punishable by 3 to 5 years in jail and fines up to ₹3 lakh.

## 2 Indian men shot dead in Italy while leaving gurdwara

**ROME**

Two Indian men have been shot dead in Italy's Covo in Bergamo province just as they were leaving a warehouse used as a place of worship during a gathering for Vaisakhi festival.

The attack occurred on Friday, a few minutes before midnight in the square in front of the Gurdwara Mata Sahib Kaur Ji in the industrial area of the town, as per reports.

The deceased were identified as Raginder Singh (48), a resident of Covo, and Gurmit Singh (48), from Agnadello.

The assailant allegedly approached the men, opened fire and then fled in a car, the paper reported. Approximately ten shell casings were recovered from the scene as authorities investigate the hypothesis of a "coldly planned execution".

As per witness, the shooter was "an Indian" who also frequented the gurdwara.

## QUICK READ

### Temple to celebrate Maha Kumbabisheka

**BENGALURU**

Maha Kumbabisheka will be held at Bhagawan Sri Balambike sametha Sri Vidyanathaswamy temple located in MVJ Medical Hospital premises in Hoskote from April 20 to 23. During this period various homa, poojas will be performed. On April 23, Sri Vinayaka, Sri Balambike Sametha Sri Vaidhyanatha Swamy temple gopura moola murthi Maha Kumbabisheka will be held. CEO of MVJ Hospital Dr Dharani Mohan has requested devotees to participate in the rituals and get the blessings.

### Special pooja performed to new chariot

**BENGALURU**

Special pooja rituals were performed to the new chariot of Sri Avimukteswaraswamy on Sunday. On Monday, special pooja and Rudrabishekam will be held. MLA Sharath Bachegowda will participate in the programme. On Tuesday, the construction work of new chariot will be commenced. The Brahmarathotsava will be held on May 1. Convener of Brahmarathotsava Committee N Keshavamurthy has requested devotees to participate in the programme.

### 'Love trap' case: Probe unearths shocking details

**BENGALURU**

Investigation has revealed that the accused Kripalani Preeti, in connection with the blackmail case against a female customs officer, cheated 50 people by having physical relations in the name of marriage. Pulakeshi Nagar police arrested Kripalani for blackmailing a female customs officer. During interrogation, it was found that the accused had blackmailed 50 people. Accused Kripalani was targeting female government officials. He used to introduce himself to female government officials as a businessman. Customs and GST officials were his targets.

He used to introduce himself and arrange lunch, dinner, and parties, and then have physical contact in the name of love and marriage. The explosive matter of blackmailing by videotaping it has been revealed during the investigation. Currently, the Pulakeshi Nagar police are conducting further investigation into this matter.

# State govt employees await March salary amid fund concerns

Technical glitches and financial constraints cited as cause for delay, allegations emerge that Rs 6,000 cr was diverted to Gruhalakshmi scheme

**BENGALURU**

Salary payments for March to state government employees across several departments have been delayed, leaving many staff members unpaid even as of April 18.

The delay has raised concerns among employees and sparked questions about fund availability and administrative processes.

Employees in key departments such as revenue, education, police, animal husbandry, and information and public relations, who usually receive their salaries within the first few days of the month, are among those affected. While some employees received their salaries around April 9–10, a large number are still awaiting payment.

Sources within departments attribute the delay to a combination of technical glitches and financial constraints. The delay has stretched beyond the usual lag seen at the end of a financial year. Usually after the financial year ends, there is a delay of one or two weeks. This three-weeks delay is unprecedented, said an education department official.

Allegations have also surfaced suggesting that funds were diverted to the Gruhalakshmi scheme ahead of the Davanagere South and Bagalkot bypolls held on April 9.

The government is said to have diverted about Rs 6,000 crore as payment was due for about three months.

Officials in the treasury department said efforts are under way to arrange funds and expressed hope that pending salaries would be disbursed by Monday. However, uncertainty persists for many of the state's estimated 6.4 lakh employees.

Teachers say the delay has disrupted household finances at a crucial time of the year. This is the time we pay school fees and for uniforms. The delay is worrying, said a teacher in Sanjaynagar.

An employee from the stamps and registration department said their department was yet to receive funds required to disburse salaries, indicating gaps in allocation and release of grants.

While CS Shadakshari, President of the Karnataka State Government Employees' Association, described such delays in April as not uncommon and largely technical, another association member reported widespread complaints, particularly from teachers. We heard that the finance department has been releasing grants partially for payment of salaries, the office-bearer added. However, Ritesh Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary, State Finance Department, dismissed claims of salary funds being diverted to the Gruhalakshmi scheme. In some departments Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) are a little laidback. Salary disbursement is delegated to the department heads. There is no reason why a government official will not get his salary, he added.

# Nearly 90L voters on final list for GBA polls

**BENGALURU**

The final electoral roll for upcoming elections to 5 city corporations under Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has pegged the electorate at around 88.95 lakh voters, setting the stage for elections in 369 wards across the city.

From the previous draft list published on March 9, which stood at 88.92 lakh voters, the count has increased by 2,833 voters in the final list published.

The electorate comprises around 45.7 lakh men, 43.2 lakh women, and 1,635 others, with over 8,023 polling stations mapped across the city. The polling stations from the draft 8,044 have been reduced to 8,023 in the final list.

The revision process, which began in early Jan, included multiple stages, from draft publication and inviting objections twice to final corrections, to eliminate duplication or errors in the rolls.

Ward-wise data indicates notable variation in voter strength, with some wards recording significantly higher electorate than others.

Subramanyapura ward of South City Corporation has the highest number at 53,660 voters, while Vijayanagar ward continues to have the fewest voters at 12,897.Election machinery will now shift focus to poll scheduling and logistics.

# Woman kidnaps sister, husband over monetary issues

**BENGALURU**

A 31-year-old homemaker, her husband and their associate have been arrested on charges of kidnapping the homemaker's younger sister and her husband over a monetary fight and locking them inside a house.

Based on the complaint filed by victim Pruthvi, a resident of Dhruvadhama residential layout in Electronics City, Hebbagodi police arrested her elder sister, S Prafulla, her husband Saleem Sheik and their associate identified as Beeresh on charges of kidnapping, assault and illegal detention.According to Pruthvi, she took a handloan of Rs 9.5 lakh sometime back, on interest. I was paying a monthly instalment of Rs 75,000. Till June last year, I repaid a total of Rs 2.7 lakh. Since I had some difficulties, I requested my brother-in-law Saleem Sheik to give some time. However, my sister and Sheik shouted at us for not paying the remaining due. Accordingly, I paid Rs 2.5 lakh more in a few more monthly instalments. I requested Sheik to give us time till this June end to repay the remaining amount, Pruthvi said. According to Pruthvi, her sister visited her house in the wee hours of April 15. Prafulla, Sheik and Beeresh hit me and my husband Abhijeet and issued dire threats for non-payment. They expressed dismay over my police complaint I made in June last year, saying Prafulla and Sheik were harassing me.

# BWSSB'S PUSH FOR TREATED WATER STALLED BY LACK OF NORMS

**BENGALURU**

The hotter summer this year, and the forecast of a below-normal monsoon in Karnataka, has led Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to revive its push for use of treated water.

In April 2024, BWSSB signed a pact with Bangalore Apartments' Federation (BAF) to promote reuse and sale of treated water. There was no progress at the time, with officials attributing it to the lack of demand. Now, BWSSB and BAF are planning to ask data centres and the construction industry to use treated water. We will hold a meeting next week with apartment associations and data centres to chart a course of action on using treated water, so that their needs can be met without putting more pressure on freshwater sources.

**BWSSB and BAF are planning to ask data centres and the construction industry to use treated water.**

Apartments are ready for this, and we will soon take this forward, BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar said. Usually, apartment complexes are allowed to sell surplus treated water at Rs 8 per kilolitre, with BWSSB buying it at Rs 10 but retaining Rs 2 as service charge. However, neither a functional supply network nor a dedicated fleet of tankers has been created to move this treated water from apartment STPs to industries, parks, or construction sites that could use it.

From the time the mandatory STP rule came into force, surplus treated water in apartment complexes continues to go to waste.

### 'Focus is on water reuse'

K Arun Kumar, BAF's General Secretary, said, revenue is secondary; the focus is on water reuse. Nearly 50 percent of supplied water to apartment complexes is treated, and we are exploring its uses in parks and beyond. However, we need a clear, government-approved framework as not a litre has been lifted so far by government. The government made the rules on mandatory STPs, so they should solve the problems as well.

According to BAF's estimates, decentralised STPs in city's apartment complexes produce about 300 Million Litres Per Day (MLD) of treated used water, and another 400 MLD is available from BWSSB STPs. The estimated citywide demand for treated water is substantial, 150 MLD for flushing and landscaping, 100 MLD for industrial operations, 300 MLD for construction industry, and 100 MLD for cooling systems in data centres and tech parks. However, this demand can be met by the STPs in apartment complexes and those under BWSSB.

## Massive fire breaks out at scrap warehouse in Hesaraghatta,

**BEGNALURU**

A major fire accident was reported at a scrap storage warehouse in Hesaraghatta on the outskirts of Bengaluru, causing panic in the area and destroying a large quantity of stored materials.

According to initial information, the fire broke out in a godown where scrap items had been stocked in huge volumes.

Within a short time, the flames spread rapidly, with the highly flammable scrap materials catching fire and intensifying the blaze.

## Lenskart clarifies store dress code after online backlash

**BENGALURU**

Eyewear retailer Lenskart said it will standardise its in-store style guidelines to explicitly allow employees to wear symbols of faith, following criticism on social media over an earlier internal document that appeared to restrict such expression.The backlash was triggered by posts on X, where users shared screenshots of what they claimed was the company's internal style guide. The document, widely circulated online, appeared to prohibit items such as religious tilak and bindis, while prescribing specific rules for accessories like hijabs and turbans. Several users alleged that the policy was discriminatory and violated constitutional protections on religious freedom. Criticism intensified over the past few days, with some accounts accusing the company of bias and questioning its workplace practices. The issue gained further traction after users claimed that community notes or clarifications on the platform had been removed, fuelling the controversy. Responding publicly, Lenskart said it had heard its community and would make its style guide more transparent. The company clarified that its updated guidelines explicitly and unambiguously welcome every symbol of faith .

## Experts call for dedicated dept for research on mental health apps

**BENGALURU**

Mental health experts emphasised the need for a full-fledged department or centre for applied research on digital mental health applications at a three-day meeting that was convened at NIMHANS and concluded Friday.

The meeting on Digital Technologies for Mental Health: Evolving Policy and Regulatory Recommendations for Safe Use, was convened by NIMHANS-ICMR Centre for Advanced Research (CAR) on Digital Interventions for Mental Health Care in collaboration with the SHUT Unit at NIMHANS.

One of the recommendations made by the CAR was a dedicated department/centre to generate implementation-focused evidence and support the integration of digital tools into training and care through public-private collaboration, while also focusing on real-world effectiveness, user safety and responsible use.Dr Mohan Isaac, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at University of Western Australia, reflecting on the recommendations, said, I strongly hope the govt takes this forward. Seconding this, Dr Prabha S Chandra, Director of Nimhans, said, it is time to establish departments of digital mental health and digital health in every organisation. This is now a specialty in itself and requires dedicated attention, and I believe this is the direction in which the future is heading.

Dr Prabha added while the focus of the conclave was on mental health apps, other aspects of the digital mental health ecosystem also had to be addressed. I would urge CAR to treat this as one in a series of consultations, with each area requiring separate attention and recommendations in the context of mental health, she said, adding that it is important to identify groups that are already working on this subject, learn from their work and build on existing efforts.

**FROM 73% TO 86%**

# *Planned intervention drove PU result turnaround: Min*

**BENGALURU**

Karnataka's jump to a record 86.4 percent pass percentage in II PU exam-1 this year follows a series of tightly coordinated interventions by the state primary and secondary education department under Minister Madhu Bangarappa, with officials pointing to structural changes rather than a one-time surge.

Calling it a result of planned academic intervention, Bangarappa told that the focus was on strengthening the entire teaching-learning cycle. We ensured timely completion of syllabus, standardised preparation tools and monitoring of academic progress in colleges.

One of the key measures was mandating completion of the syllabus by December, giving students time for revision and practice. This created a structured preparation window before the exam, which was missing earlier, the Minister said.

The department also ensured the early appointment of guest lecturers from June. Availability of teachers from day one helped avoid learning gaps, especially in government colleges, he said. For the first time, uniform academic support material was rolled out statewide. We introduced subject-wise blueprints, model question papers and exhaustive question banks so that students clearly understand the pattern and expectations, he added.

A major shift came with the conduct of two state-level preparatory examinations using centrally set papers. These exams helped us identify student-wise and subject-wise gaps. Based on that, targeted interventions were taken at the college level, the Minister said. To track the implementation, the department introduced large-scale academic monitoring.

## 'Judges who fall prey to greed must be weeded out'

**BENGALURU**

The Supreme Court has accepted the recommendations for the second National Judicial Salary, and judges who can no longer live on their earnings and who are prone to greed and temptation should stay away from the judicial system, said Supreme Court Justice BV Nagaratna.

She was speaking at the 22nd Biennial State Level Conference of Judicial Officers held at the Dr Babu Rajendra Prasad International Auditorium of GKVK.

Judges should be courageous and independent in performing their duties. They should not be influenced by external considerations while deciding cases. There can be no 'coordination' while deciding cases. He said that the tainted decision of judges is a black mark on the judges and the judiciary.One should be careful while using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for legal research. There are instances where artificial intelligence has produced false case laws.

QUICK READ

## Man found dead in car, murder suspected

**BENGALURU**
A man who had left home early Sunday morning was found dead in a car on Manipal County Road. The deceased is Narayanappa (56), a resident of Basapura. Narayanappa had left home at 5 am. Later, he was found dead in a Swift car. The public, seeing the body in the car, informed the police. Narayanappa's body was found with injuries on his face and chest. The Electronic City police, who arrived at the scene, inspected the scene and informed the family. The family has alleged that he was murdered, left in a car and left on the road. It is suspected that he was murdered for money. The police, who have registered a complaint regarding the incident, are investigating. The body has been sent to St. John's Hospital for a post-mortem examination.

## BCMC chief visits offices of revenue officials

**BENGALURU**
Bengaluru Central Municipal Corporation (BCMC) Development Commissioner Daljit Kumar on Sunday visited the offices of revenue officers of 6 divisions under the jurisdiction of the corporation and mustering places to review the steps being taken for the census work. He enquired about the attendance of the enumerators who were appointed as enumerators for the census work. He instructed to issue notices to those who were absent from duty. He asked them to distribute census kits to the enumerators.

## Fire breaks out at Bellandur lake

**BENGALURU**
A fire incident was reported at Bellandur Lake in Bengaluru early Sunday morning, creating concern among residents and authorities. According to initial information, the blaze broke out during the early hours of the day. Soon after the incident was noticed, teams from the fire and emergency services rushed to the spot and began operations to bring the situation under control.Fire fighters were seen actively working to extinguish the flames and prevent the fire from spreading further. The exact reason behind the fire has not yet been identified, and officials are yet to confirm what triggered the incident. The development comes at a time when efforts are underway to improve and restore the lake. The lake is currently being developed by the Bangalore Development Authority.

# CENSUS 2027: DOOR-TO-DOOR SURVEY BEGINS

House-to-house survey underway as enumerators collect detailed data on homes, families, facilities, and assets across GBA limits

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

The Census 2027 exercise has officially begun within the GBA limits, with enumerators visiting households to collect detailed information as part of the nationwide population survey. Residents can expect door-to-door visits where officials will gather a wide range of data related to housing, family details, amenities, and economic status.During these visits, enumerators will first record basic information about the house. This includes the building number, materials used for the floor, walls, and roof, the purpose of the building, whether residential or commercial, and the overall condition of the house.

Officials will then collect key details about the family living in the house. This includes the total number of family members, the name of the head of the household, along with their gender and caste category, including SC/ST or others. Information on ownership status of the house, number of rooms, and the number of families or groups living within the same premises will also be noted.

A major part of the survey focuses on household facilities. Enumerators will ask about the source and availability of drinking water, types of toilet facilities, sanitation systems, and whether the house has water supply connections. Details about bathroom facilities, kitchen availability, LPG or PNG connections, and cooking fuel used will also be recorded.The survey will further capture information on household assets. Residents will be asked whether they own items such as a radio, television, mobile phone, internet connection, computer or laptop. Ownership of vehicles like bicycles and motor vehicles, as well as bank or post office accounts, will also be documented. In addition, enumerators will gather other important details such as the main cereal consumed in the household and the employment status of family members, including both employed and unemployed individuals.

# KSCA denies link to alleged ticket resale irregularities

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) on Sunday categorically denied any connection to entities or individuals under investigation for allegedly procuring and reselling cricket match tickets at inflated prices.

In an official statement issued by spokesperson Vinay Mruthyunjaya, the association clarified that it is neither the ticketing agency nor the selling authority for Royal Challengers Bengaluru matches. Ticket sales to the general public, it said, are handled exclusively through the franchise's authorised channels and designated partners.

KSCA stated that it only receives a limited allocation of tickets, which are distributed strictly among affiliated cricket clubs, permanent members, and select statutory or government authorities associated with its operations. "KSCA does not sell tickets to the general public," the statement emphasised.

Addressing reports linking the association to the ongoing probe, KSCA asserted that the entities being investigated have no direct or indirect association with it. It further clarified that the individuals involved in the matter are not members of the association.

The association affirmed its commitment to fully cooperate with investigating authorities and urged a thorough probe to identify those responsible and take appropriate legal action.KSCA, under the leadership of B. K. Venkatesh Prasad, reiterated its dedication to maintaining transparency, integrity, and the promotion of cricket across Karnataka.

### IPL black ticket racket widens, DNA firm under scanner

**BENGALURU**: The investigation into the illegal sale of IPL tickets in the black market has taken a new turn, with authorities widening their probe and issuing notices to key entities.The case, which had already drawn attention following a stampede-related incident, has now brought fresh trouble for a private ticketing agency. The Central Crime Branch (CCB) has issued a notice to DNA, the firm responsible for managing ticket distribution.The development follows the arrest of a man identified as Chandrashekhar, who was allegedly involved in selling IPL tickets illegally. During questioning, the accused revealed links to a member of the Karnataka State Cricket Association. According to police sources, Chandrashekhar, who worked in a hotel catering unit inside M Chinnaswamy Stadium, was reportedly used as a channel to sell tickets in the black market. He is said to have named KSCA member Ganesh Harikesh during the investigation.
The probe has now shifted focus to how the tickets were originally sourced.

# Authorities push for better waste handling, transparency

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

Until now, residents were largely separating waste only into wet and dry categories. While some areas had begun separating sanitary waste, it was not consistently followed across the city.Under the newly implemented Solid Waste Management Rules 2026, segregation into four types is now compulsory. These include wet waste, dry waste, sanitary waste and domestic hazardous waste. Wet waste refers to biodegradable material such as food and organic waste. Dry waste includes items that can be recycled, such as plastic, paper and metal. Sanitary waste covers items used for personal hygiene, which were earlier often mixed with other waste. The fourth category, domestic hazardous waste, includes materials that require special care during disposal.

The move is aimed at improving waste handling practices and ensuring safer and more efficient disposal systems across the city.To strengthen monitoring and bring in greater transparency, authorities are also planning to introduce a centralised online system. A dedicated digital portal will be launched soon to track daily waste management operations and maintain accurate records of infrastructure and collection processes.This system is expected to help officials closely monitor waste segregation, streamline operations and identify gaps in implementation.The initiative was discussed in detail during a public meeting organised by the Bangalore Solid Waste Management Limited, where the new rules and their implementation strategy were presented.

### 'Public, agencies need to join hands'

Officials emphasised that the new system will require active participation from residents and better coordination from civic agencies to ensure its success. With the new rules coming into force, authorities are now focusing on spreading awareness and ensuring strict compliance to improve overall waste management in the city.

**A major change has been introduced in the city's waste management system, with authorities making it mandatory to segregate garbage into four different categories instead of the existing two.**

# RAPIDO RIDER TURNS BURGLAR: COPS CRACK RS 35L GOLD THEFT CASE

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

A case of house theft in Bengaluru has taken a serious turn, with police arresting a man who allegedly used his job as a bike taxi rider to identify and target houses.

The accused, identified as Nagaraj, had come to Bengaluru from Mandya in search of work. However, instead of regular employment, he is accused of getting involved in thefts across the city.

According to the police, Nagaraj was working as a rider with Rapido. During his trips, he would move around residential areas and closely observe houses that were locked during the daytime. These houses were then marked as targets.

Investigations revealed that he carried out thefts in broad daylight, specifically choosing homes that were locked and unattended. Police said the accused was addicted to online betting, which pushed him towards committing crimes to arrange money.

He was arrested by the Tilak Nagar Police Station in connection with a house burglary case. During questioning, it was found that he had previously been arrested by Ramamurthy Nagar Police Station in a similar house theft case.

Shockingly, within just one week of being released from jail, Nagaraj allegedly committed another burglary under the Tilak Nagar police limits.

In the latest case, he is accused of stealing gold ornaments worth around Rs 35 lakh. However, he could not sell the stolen jewellery. Instead, he hid the valuables inside the storage compartment of a two-wheeler.

Police said he parked the bike near a park in Ramamurthy Nagar and kept the gold hidden inside an Activa scooter's dickey to avoid suspicion.

Further investigation also revealed that the accused had provided a false address while registering as a Rapido rider.

Before taking up bike taxi work, Nagaraj had worked as a delivery boy for Swiggy and Zomato. After his release from jail, he resumed work as a Rapido rider, which he allegedly used as a cover to continue criminal activities.

The accused is currently in police custody, and Tilak Nagar police are carrying out detailed interrogation to uncover more details about his activities.4-way waste segregation now mandatory in Bengaluru City under new 2026 rules

## Cong never wanted reservation for women: Thakur

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

Former Union Minister Anurag Thakur launched a scathing attack, saying that the Congress never wanted reservation for women. Only their families wanted power.

Addressing the media at the Malleshwaram BJP office on Sunday, he said that it was the Congress and the opposition that stabbed women in the back. They have stopped the Women's Reservation Bill five times. They should be ashamed. The Congress stood for the bill because there is an election in 2023. Now the same Congress has stabbed women in the back. They can go to Wayanad or anywhere and contest. He criticised that the Congress did not give this opportunity to other women.

They spread the news that there would be losses in South India. But no state would lose. No state in the country would lose, it would only gain. The Lok Sabha seats of all states would increase by 50%.

## FTI Jn works trigger major traffic diversions in Rajajinagar

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

Heavy vehicles, BMTC buses and light vehicles to follow separate diversion routes on Outer Ring Road to ease congestion during ongoing construction.

The Rajajinagar Traffic Police have introduced traffic diversions starting Saturday in view of ongoing construction work at the FTI Junction on the Outer Ring Road.

The changes have been put in place to ensure smoother movement of vehicles and to reduce congestion in the busy stretch.

For heavy vehicles travelling from Surana College Junction towards Krishnandanagar or Mahalakshmi Layout, a specific diversion route has been outlined. These vehicles must take a left turn at Surana College, proceed to take a U-turn at SRS Junction, then turn right at the CMTI signal, and finally take a left at Lorry Terminal Cross to reach their destination.

Public transport has also been affected. Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation buses heading from CMTI Junction towards Sumanahalli or Nayandahalli will not pass under the FTI bridge. Instead, they will use the flyover and continue their journey via Dr Rajkumar Samadhi.

Light vehicles, including cars and two-wheelers, have been given a separate route. Motorists travelling towards Mahalakshmi Layout from the Surana College side are required to turn left near the FTI bridge, take a U-turn at the CMTI signal, and then turn left at Lorry Terminal Cross.

Traffic police officials have urged commuters to follow the new directions carefully and cooperate with authorities during this period. The temporary diversions are aimed at minimising inconvenience and ensuring that traffic continues to move smoothly despite the construction work.

## 'BJP plotting 'political surgical strike' on South in name of women's reservation'

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC President DK Shivakumar has launched a strong attack, saying that the NDA government at the Centre has hatched a 'heinous conspiracy' to erase the political identity of South India under the guise of women empowerment.He expressed outrage in the publication, saying that the Women's Reservation Bill that the BJP is going to implement is just a 'magic trick' and a 'political surgical strike' to snatch the rights of the southern states.The trick of constituency redistribution: The Congress party has been adamant that women should get political power. Those who opposed Rajiv Gandhi's reservation in local bodies are now chanting for women's reservation. However, the condition that 'constituency redistribution' must happen for this reservation to be implemented is illogical. Instead of providing immediate justice to women, this is a conspiracy to postpone reservation and use the redistribution to the advantage of the BJP, they have said.

FOR FARMERS' HELP

# *Hosakote to get cold storage worth Rs 50 cr*

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

A plan to build a new cold storage with a capacity of 10 metric tons near Jadigenahalli village in the taluk at a cost of Rs 50 crore will be brought soon to ensure that the fruits and vegetables grown by farmers last for a long time, said MLA Sharath Bachegowda.Speaking after inaugurating a programme to distribute various facilities worth about Rs 4 crore to beneficiaries from the Animal Husbandry, Agriculture, Horticulture and Sericulture departments, he said that a program to distribute facilities worth about Rs 4 crore was organized today to directly distribute facilities to the farmers. Among these, the Animal Husbandry Department distributed 60 fodder cutting machines, rubber mats for cattle, uniforms to cattle keepers, launched a vaccination campaign to control foot-and-mouth disease for cattle and inaugurated a new assembly hall. The Agriculture Department distributed assistance to farmers who had constructed agricultural wells under the Krishibagya scheme to beneficiaries. The Sericulture Department distributed electrical space, power weeder, 4-stroke brushcutter, plastic moonshine and the Horticulture Department distributed honey. He said that a program has been organized to distribute assistance for irrigation, greenhouses, construction of agricultural wells, installation of tractor-based boomers, solar pump sets.The state Congress government is providing only five categories and there is a lack of proper facilities for other categories, which is far from the truth. The departments of agriculture, horticulture and silk have distributed facilities worth Rs 4 crore to farmers, steps have been taken to build cold storage, assistance has been distributed to farmers by BAMUL.

QUICK READ

## Bar Stabbing Case: 20-Year-Old Arrested

**Nelamangala**

A man has been arrested in connection with a stabbing incident at Saptagiri Bar in Dabaspet in Nelamangala taluk. The accused, Mohammed Sufiyan (20), a resident of Pavagada, is alleged to have stabbed a bar supplier on April 11. The victim, Sanju, a supplier from Kundgol in Dharwad district, sustained injuries to his arm after being attacked with a knife during the incident. Following the complaint, a case was registered at the Dabaspet police station. Police investigation led to the arrest of the accused, who has now been remanded to Parappana Agrahara Central Prison. Further inquiries into the incident are underway. Police said details of motive are being verified. Authorities have stated that appropriate legal action will follow based on the investigation findings.

## Burglars loot Rs 1.80 lakh cash, liquor from bar and temple

**Nelamangala**

A series of burglaries were reported in Dabaspet, Nelamangala taluk, Bengaluru, where thieves targeted a bar and a temple and escaped with cash and liquor. According to police, unidentified miscreants attempted to cut the CCTV camera wires at the Muneshwara Temple on Kengal Road and also tried to lock the premises but failed. The same gang broke into SLV Comfort Bar owned by Srinivas using iron rods and sticks to force open the door. They stole around Rs 1.80 lakh from the cash counter along with a large number of liquor bottles and water bottles. The theft came to light when temple priests arrived in the morning and noticed the damage.

## Assault on Revenue Officer in Nelamangala Village

**Nelamangala**

In a shocking incident at Koolipura village under the Nelamangala Municipal Corporation limits, a revenue officer of the Nelamangala Municipal Council was allegedly assaulted. According to police, the accused have been identified as Narasimha Murthy, Nagaraj, and M. Narasimha. The officer sustained injuries in the attack and was immediately shifted to Nelamangala General Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment.

Following the incident, local authorities acted swiftly and detained all three accused persons. A case has been registered at the Nelamangala Rural police station, and an investigation has been initiated to determine the circumstances that led to the assault.

# Gowrammakere Road Delay Triggers Public Anger

### LONG-DELAYED CONSTRUCTION OF GOWRAMMAKERE MAIN ROAD DISRUPTS DAILY LIFE SEVERELY

**RAMANAGARA**

The prolonged delay in the construction of Gowrammakere main road, a key stretch in Magadi town of Bengaluru South District, has become a major source of inconvenience for residents and daily commuters. The incomplete roadwork has significantly affected traffic movement, public safety, and basic accessibility in the region, leading to growing frustration among locals.Residents report that the condition of the road has worsened over time due to the

halted construction activities. Large sections of the road remain unfinished, making it difficult for motorists, including two-wheelers and four-wheelers, to navigate safely. During peak hours, traffic congestion has become a regular issue, with vehicles moving slowly through uneven and damaged stretches.

A major concern raised by the public is the accumulation of sewage water on the road. Due to poor drainage management and incomplete infrastructure work, wastewater frequently overflows onto the main stretch. This has created unhygienic conditions and increased the risk of accidents, especially for commuters who are forced to pass through waterlogged areas.Locals have strongly criticized the contractor responsible for the project, alleging negligence and lack of accountability. According to residents, repeated delays and poor coordination have left the project unfinished for an extended period. Many believe that the pace of work does not match the urgency required for a road that serves as a primary route for daily transportation and local commerce.Pedestrians are also facing severe difficulties as walking through the area has become unsafe. Shop owners along the stretch report a decline in customer visits due to accessibility issues, further affecting local business activity. Emergency vehicles, including ambulances, are also said to be struggling to navigate the damaged road during urgent situations.

Community members have urged local authorities to intervene and ensure that construction work is completed without further delay. They have also demanded stricter monitoring of contractors to prevent similar situations in future infrastructure projects. The ongoing situation highlights broader concerns about urban infrastructure planning and execution in rapidly growing regions. With increasing public pressure, residents are hoping for immediate corrective measures to restore safe and smooth .

# Chitradurga Police Bust Illegal Brothel Racket

**CHITRADURGA**

The Chitradurga city police conducted a major raid on an alleged illegal prostitution network operating from a residential area in Vidyanagar, Chitradurga, leading to the arrest of two individuals and the rescue of two women who were being exploited in the operation. The coordinated action was carried out following specific intelligence inputs received by the police regarding unlawful activities being conducted inside a private house.

According to officials, the police team conducted a surprise inspection of the premises and found evidence suggesting that the location was being used as a center for illegal commercial sexual exploitation. During the operation, two accused individuals identified as Asina Bhanu and Ashwak were taken into custody on the spot. Preliminary investigation indicates that both individuals were actively involved in managing and fa-

Two accused arrested and two women rescued in major raid operation

cilitating the illegal activities from the residential property.

Authorities stated that the accused had been allegedly using the house to illegally detain women and force them into prostitution-related activities. The raid resulted in the safe rescue of two women who were found inside the premises at the time of the operation. The rescued individuals were immediately provided with protection and were moved to a safe location for further counseling and assistance as per standard protocol.The operation was conducted under the supervision of Chitradurga Superintendent of Police Ranjith Kumar, who directed the team to ensure a swift and thorough response based on the received intelligence. Police officials also carried out a detailed search of the premises to collect additional evidence that could support the ongoing investigation.Following the raid, a formal case has been registered at the Chitradurga Nagar police station under relevant sections of law related to illegal confinement and human exploitation. Investigators are now working to determine whether the accused are part of a larger network operating in the region and are also examining possible financial transactions linked to the illegal activity.Authorities have confirmed that further inquiries are underway and additional arrests may be made as the investigation progresses. Police have also appealed to the public to report any suspicious activities that may be connected to similar illegal.t

## Class 9 Student Drowns in Pond While Swimming with Friends

**CHITRADURGA**

A tragic incident was reported from Hangal village in Molakalmuru taluk of Chitradurga district, where a school student lost his life after drowning in an agricultural pond. The incident occurred on Sunday afternoon and has left the local community in deep shock and grief.The deceased has been identified as Karthik, a Class 9 student from Hangal village. According to initial information, Karthik had gone out with his friends during the summer vacation and decided to swim in a nearby agricultural pond located in the village outskirts. What began as a casual outing turned into a tragic accident when the boy reportedly struggled in the water and drowned.Eyewitnesses stated that Karthik and his friends entered the pond to swim without realizing the depth and potential danger of the water body. While the other children managed to stay safe, Karthik was unable to return to the surface after entering deeper waters.

*Severe drought conditions leave growers facing financial hardship*

# Farmers Struggle after Crop Loss and Debt

**CHITRADURGA**

Farmers in parts of Chitradurga district are facing an increasingly difficult situation as prolonged dry conditions and erratic rainfall have severely impacted agricultural productivity. In several villages, including those dependent on seasonal rains, crops have withered before reaching maturity, leaving growers without expected income and burdened with mounting debts.

One such case highlights the struggles of a nut grower who invested heavily in cultivation, hoping for a good harvest. However, the lack of sufficient rainfall and rising temperatures caused significant damage to the crop. The plants, once green and promising, now stand dry and lifeless across the fields, reflecting the harsh reality faced by many farmers in the region.

Agriculture in this area depends largely on timely rains, but recent weather patterns have proven unreliable. Farmers who borrowed money for seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation now find themselves unable to recover their investments.

With little to no yield, repaying loans has become a serious challenge, pushing many into deeper financial distress.

Local farmers say that despite their efforts to manage water resources and protect their crops, the intensity of the drought has made it nearly impossible to sustain farming activities. Some have considered shifting to alternative livelihoods, while others continue to hope for support from authorities in the form of relief measures or compensation.

Experts warn that such recurring climate challenges could have long-term consequences for agricultural sustainability in the region. They emphasize the need for improved irrigation systems, drought-resistant crop varieties, and better financial support mechanisms to help farmers cope with unpredictable conditions.The situation serves as a reminder of the vulnerability of rural communities to climate and economic pressures. Without timely intervention and adequate support, many farmers risk losing not only their crops but also their primary means of livelihood, leading to broader social and economic concerns in the district.

## No blazers, ties for students amid heatwave

**CHAMARAJANAGAR**

In view of rising temperatures, Shreeroopa, Deputy Commissioner of Chamarajanagar, has directed all educational institutions not to compel students to wear blazers, ties, or heavy uniforms. The order comes as the district recorded a maximum temperature of 38.8°C, raising concerns over student health and safety. The directive applies to all government, aided, and private schools and colleges across the district.Officials stated that wearing heavy clothing during heatwave conditions could adversely impact students, leading to discomfort and heat-related illnesses. Institutions have been asked to allow light, loose, and comfortable attire while maintaining discipline.As part of precautionary measures, schools and colleges must ensure the availability of clean drinking water in all classrooms. Authorities have also advised avoiding outdoor activities during peak afternoon hours and creating awareness among students about heatwave-related health risks.

# MLA Inspects Proposed Food Court Sites, Pushes Urban Development Plan

**CHITRADURGA**

The focus on transforming Chitradurga city into a more organized and visually improved urban centre continues as local legislator K.C. Veerendra Pappi visited several locations on Sunday to inspect proposed food court sites and interact with residents regarding civic issues.

During his visit to the Kelakote area, the MLA reviewed multiple public spaces, including the stretch in front of Saraswati Law College, where roadside informal stalls currently operate. He stated that the core objective of the development initiative is to enhance the overall appearance and functionality of Chitradurga city while ensuring better facilities for small vendors and the public. He emphasized that detailed development plans have already been prepared following discussions with district administration officials, including the Deputy Commissioner.

As part of the urban redevelopment plan, the city municipal authorities are working on removing unauthorized roadside temporary stalls and replacing them with structured food court complexes. According to the MLA, these food courts will be designed to provide essential amenities such as electricity, clean drinking water, and proper sanitation facilities. He noted that this transition will not only improve hygiene and traffic management but also benefit vendors by giving them a more stable and organized business environment.

He also appealed to street vendors and residents for cooperation, stating that public support is essential for the successful implementation of the project. He added that similar food court development initiatives will be extended to multiple parts of the city in the coming phases.

In addition to the development review, the MLA listened to grievances raised by residents of Kelakote, particularly concerns regarding safety and infrastructure. Residents of Bovi Colony highlighted issues related to a drainage canal where retaining walls have partially collapsed, posing a risk to children who frequently play nearby. Responding to these concerns, he directed municipal officials, including the city commissioner, to immediately inspect the site more important.

Municipal officials and local residents accompanied the visit, providing inputs and participating in discussions on future development plans.

## Siddhartha Media Award Ceremony to Honour 35 Municipal Workers

**TUMAKURU**

The Siddhartha Media Study Centre, located on the SSIT campus in Tumakuru, has announced a two-day state-level media festival titled "Media Fest Celebration 2026," scheduled for April 23 and 24. As part of the inaugural programme, 35 women municipal workers will be honoured with the Siddhartha Media Award in recognition of their dedicated public service.On Sunday, the selected civic workers were formally invited to the event at the Press Club premises in Tumakuru. The invitation programme was led by the Director of the Siddhartha Media Study Centre, B.T. Muddesh, who welcomed the workers and presented them with official invitation letters and ceremonial greetings. The initiative was described as a gesture to acknowledge the often-unrecognized contributions of municipal workers in maintaining urban cleanliness and public hygiene.According to organisers, the media festival has been dedicated to civic workers as a mark of respect for their selfless service. The inaugural event will feature the presentation of awards to the selected 35 women workers, highlighting their role in supporting the city's sanitation system and public welfare.B.T. Muddesh stated that the festival will also include various competitions and academic activities over the two-day programme.

MIDNIGHT GAS PANIC

# *Residents Awakened Overnight Over Gas Cylinder Concernst*

**CHITRADURGA**

Residents of a quiet neighborhood in Holalkere town of Chitradurga district experienced a sudden disturbance late at night after reports of a suspected gas cylinder issue caused alarm among locals. According to eyewitnesses, several households were abruptly awakened as word spread that a gas cylinder might have been leaking or posing a potential danger in the area.

The incident reportedly took place in the late hours, when most residents were asleep. A few individuals noticed unusual activity and a possible smell associated with gas, which quickly raised concerns about safety. Within minutes, people began stepping out of their homes to understand the situation, creating a sense of urgency and confusion in the locality.

One of the local residents, who was present at the scene, stated that the primary concern was to ensure that no immediate harm occurred due to a possible leak. Neighbors alerted each other and took precautionary steps, including keeping a safe distance and avoiding any activity that could trigger a fire. Some individuals also attempted to identify the exact source of the issue while ensuring that others remained cautious.

The situation drew a small crowd as more residents gathered, worried about the safety of their families and property. Despite the tense atmosphere, there were no immediate reports of injuries or damage. Authorities or emergency services were expected to be informed promptly to assess and handle the situation more effectively.

Incidents like these highlight the importance of awareness and preparedness when dealing with household gas cylinders.

## QUICK READ

### Condemnation over Removal of MLC Naseer Ahmed

**KOLAR**

Leaders of various organisations in the district have condemned the dismissal of MLC Naseer Ahmed from the post of Chief Minister's Political Secretary. Addressing a press conference in Kolar, Dravida Vimukna Sangha president Ananthakeerthi alleged that the Congress high command had disrespected a leader of a community by sacking senior minority leader Naseer Ahmed from the post of political secretary to the Chief Minister. He said that in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, two Congress MLAs from Kolar district and one MLC had staged a protest against the party's decision and resigned against AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's decision. However, no action was taken against them, while the action against minority leader Naseer Ahmed was termed condemnable.

### Artist's Protest over Gomala Encroachment Sparks Official Action

**CHIKKABALLAPUR**

An artist's unique protest over alleged encroachment of government grazing land in Varadanayakanahalli village has drawn attention in Shidlaghatta taluk. Dhare Prakash, a noted artist from Varadanayakanahalli in Shidlaghatta taluk, walked to the taluk office with his cattle while carrying a portrait of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, demanding justice over alleged illegal encroachment of government gomal land. He alleged that influential individuals in the village were misusing grazing land meant for public and Dalit welfare, making life difficult for the poor. Local leaders and social activists, including DSS Taluk Convener T.A. Chalapathi and others, extended support to his protest and urged authorities to protect the land. The Tahsildar received the petition and assured that revenue officials would inspect the site and take appropriate action after verification.

### Life Term for Sister-in-Law in Chitradurga Murder Case

**CHITRADURGA**

A district court in Chitradurga has sentenced a woman to life imprisonment for the murder of her brother-in-law in a financial dispute case. The incident occurred on January 14, 2023, in Sivaganga village, where Basavaraj was killed following an argument over money. Police said the accused, Radhamma, along with her associate Thimmaraj, planned and carried out the attack after a heated dispute. The Chitrahalli Gate police investigated the case and submitted a chargesheet before the court. After examining evidence and witness statements, Additional District and Sessions Judge Veeranna Somashekar pronounced the verdict. Both accused were awarded life imprisonment and fined Rs 50,000 each. Prosecutor Shamsher Ali Khan represented the government during the trial. The ruling brings closure to a case that drew local attention. The court observed that financial greed led to the crime and stressed strict punishment as a deterrent in similar cases in the region going forward firmly.

# Cylinder Blast Destroys Hut in Chitradurga

Cylinder blast destroys hut in Chitradurga, family loses valuables worth lakhs

**CHITRADURGA**

A devastating fire accident triggered by a cylinder explosion completely destroyed a hut house in Chitradurga district, leaving a family in shock after valuables worth several lakhs were reduced to ashes. The incident occurred at the residence of Chitralingappa, where a sudden blast in a cooking gas cylinder caused flames to erupt rapidly. Within minutes, the fire engulfed the entire structure due to the highly flammable materials used in the hut's construction, giving the family almost no time to salvage their belongings.

According to preliminary information, the fire destroyed cash estimated at nearly three lakh rupees, along with gold ornaments, household essentials, and large quantities of stored food grains. Residents in the locality reported that the flames spread at an alarming speed, making early containment nearly impossible.

The intensity of the blaze caused panic among nearby families, who rushed to the spot but were unable to enter the burning structure. The hut, built with easily combustible materials, collapsed as the fire intensified, resulting in total loss of property and personal belongings. The incident highlights the vulnerability of low-income housing structures to sudden fire hazards, especially when fuel storage and cooking equipment are involved.

Eyewitnesses described the scene as chaotic, with thick smoke and continuous bursts of flames preventing any immediate rescue efforts before authorities arrived.

Fortunately, no occupants were present inside the house at the time of the explosion, preventing what could have been a major tragedy involving loss of life. Local officials confirmed that there were no injuries reported in the incident. Fire and Emergency Services personnel were immediately alerted and rushed to the location.

After an intense firefighting operation, they managed to bring the flames under control, although by then the hut had already been completely gutted.

Authorities are expected to assess the total damage and investigate the exact cause of the cylinder failure, while providing necessary support to the affected family.

The incident has raised concerns among residents about safety measures while handling domestic gas cylinders in rural households.

# Mother and Son Accused in Family Murder

**TUMAKURU**

A disturbing murder investigation has emerged from Tumakuru district where police allege a planned conspiracy involving family members and a former lover led to the killing of a 32 year old man identified as Narasimhamurthy.

He was found dead in Dandipura village under Madhugiri taluk with initial reports suggesting a natural death due to alcohol consumption and grief following his wife's demise.

However investigation by Kodigenahalli police revealed that the death was staged and three suspects were arrested after allegedly confessing during interrogation.

Police sources said Narasimhamurthy had married Sujatha in a love marriage approved by both families and she later worked in a garment company where she met a man named Amar.

Investigators believe their friendship turned into an illicit relationship and Sujatha later gave birth to a child before dying due to illness a few months ago.

After her death Narasimhamurthy became addicted to alcohol while Amar allegedly continued visiting the family home claiming a connection with the child which led to frequent disputes with Sujatha's mother Jayamma.

Police said the dispute escalated into a conspiracy where Jayamma and her son Nandeesh allegedly joined Amar to plan the murder of Narasimhamurthy.

The victim was invited to a chicken meal gathering where he was given alcohol and later taken to a deserted area where he was strangled with a rope and his body dumped near a roadside location.

Authorities said the accused attempted to stage the scene as a drunken accidental death by placing the body near a display related to his late wife.

After the incident the accused shifted the victim to a health center pretending he was unconscious but doctors later found neck marks and ear bleeding which indicated foul play and led to police action after a complaint from the victim's sister Gayathri.

Police stated that all three accused have been taken into custody and further investigation is underway to determine the full sequence of events, verify motive claims, and collect additional forensic evidence to strengthen the case and ensure appropriate legal proceedings are initiated against those involved.

*Mass fish deaths reported in historic lake amid severe summer heat conditions*

# Thousands of Fish Die in Chitradurga Lake

**CHITRADURGA**

The historic Thimmannayakana Lake on the outskirts of Chitradurga city is facing a severe environmental crisis as thousands of dead fish have been found floating on its shrinking waters. The once vibrant lake, which remained fully filled for the past three years due to good monsoon rainfall, has now drastically dried up following the intense summer heat. Rising temperatures have caused rapid evaporation, leaving only small patches of stagnant water in the lake bed.

Local residents have reported disturbing scenes where large numbers of dead fish are floating along the lake's edges, while several others are still struggling for survival in the remaining shallow water. The strong foul smell from decomposing fish has spread across nearby areas, causing discomfort to residents who depend on the lake for water needs and livestock support.

Experts explain that the severe drop in water levels has resulted in a critical shortage of oxygen in the lake, making survival impossible for most aquatic life. As a result, thousands of fish are believed to have died over the past few days due to suffocation and extreme heat conditions. The situation has also raised concerns about the long term health of the lake ecosystem.

Concerned locals have demanded immediate action from authorities to protect the remaining aquatic life and prevent further damage. Many have also urged the government to implement emergency water management measures to avoid similar incidents in the future.

Officials from the fisheries department have acknowledged the issue. Assistant Director Tulsidas stated that a team will soon be dispatched to the site to assess the situation and take necessary steps to safeguard any surviving fish. He also mentioned that oxygen levels and water conditions will be examined to determine possible rescue operations.

Environmental specialists note that such incidents are becoming increasingly common in drought prone regions where rising temperatures and irregular rainfall patterns are severely affecting natural water bodies. The situation at Thimmannayakana Lake serves as a serious warning about the impact of climate stress on aquatic ecosystems and highlights the urgent need for sustainable conservation efforts.

# Farmers Urge Priority Role for Civil Kamari Company

**CHITRADURGA**

A group of farmers in Chitradurga has urged local authorities to ensure that the Civil Kamari Company is given a leading role in the implementation of solar-powered irrigation pumps across the district. The demand comes amid growing interest in renewable energy solutions in agriculture, particularly as farmers seek reliable and cost-effective alternatives to conventional power sources.

# Tumkur University Salary Delay Crisis Deepens

**TUMAKURU**

The salary delay crisis at Tumkur University has intensified, with guest lecturers and faculty members still awaiting their March payments even after 19 days of delay. The prolonged hold-up has sparked growing frustration among staff and raised serious concerns over administrative efficiency and financial planning within the institution.At the University College of Arts, covering both undergraduate and postgraduate departments, salaries are typically credited by the 10th of every month for undergraduate faculty and around the 15th for postgraduate staff. However, this month, payments have not been released within the expected timeline, leaving many employees in financial distress.

The delay has had a significant impact on lecturers, many of whom depend entirely on their monthly income for essential expenses such as rent, household needs, and loan repayments. The uncertainty surrounding the disbursement has added to their financial strain, especially as the delay continues without a confirmed payment date.

Speaking to NewsFlash Daily™, Vice Chancellor M. Venkateshwarlu acknowledged the issue and attributed the delay to pending budget allocation for March salaries. He stated, "It will take another 2–3 days to process salaries as the budget is yet to be allocated. Every year, March salaries face delays, but I assure payment will be credited soon for guest lecturers." He also clarified that the delay affects not only guest lecturers but also permanent faculty members, including assistant and associate professors.Despite this assurance, guest lecturers have expressed strong dissatisfaction, stating that such delays have become a recurring issue. Many argue that the problem disproportionately affects them compared to permanent staff. One guest lecturer noted that while permanent faculty eventually receive their payments, guest lecturers face repeated uncertainty. They highlighted that monthly expenses and financial commitments such as rent and EMIs become increasingly difficult to manage when salaries are delayed.

The current salary structure places PhD-qualified guest lecturers at approximately 40,000 rupees per month, KSET or NET-qualified lecturers at around 38,000 rupees, and others at about 32,000 rupees before tax deductions. Even with this structured pay scale, lecturers claim there is unequal treatment in the timing of salary disbursement.Some staff members have also alleged that financial strain appears to be more severe for guest lecturers during institutional events and administrative cycles, raising broader questions about internal fund allocation priorities.

The ongoing situation has once again highlighted gaps in financial management and administrative coordination at Tumkur University. With growing demands from faculty for timely and equal salary payments, pressure is mounting on the administration .

# VILLAGERS DEMAND ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL TREE FELLING IN WENGASANDRA

**KOLAR**

Residents of Wengasandra village in Kolar district have raised serious concerns over the increasing incidents of illegal tree felling in their area, urging authorities to take immediate and strict action. The issue has sparked outrage among villagers, who say that the unchecked cutting of trees is not only harming the environment but also threatening their livelihoods.A group of local residents recently gathered to voice their grievances, highlighting how valuable trees are being cut down without permission. According to them, these activities have been taking place for some time, but no concrete steps have been taken to stop the offenders. Villagers allege that despite repeated complaints to concerned departments, the response has been slow and inadequate.Community members emphasized that the loss of trees is already having visible consequences. The area, once known for its greenery, is gradually witnessing a decline in vegetation cover.

This has led to rising temperatures, reduced soil moisture, and a negative impact on local agriculture. Farmers in particular are worried that continued deforestation.

**KOLAR POLICE RAID**

# *Kolar Police Launch Major Crackdown Raid*

**KOLAR**

In a significant law-and-order enforcement action, police conducted a surprise and coordinated raid targeting the residences of rowdy sheeters across Kolar district, focusing particularly on Kolar Gold Fields and Bangarapet town. The operation was designed to curb rising criminal activity and strengthen surveillance over habitual offenders in the region.

The operation was carried out under the leadership of KGF Superintendent of Police Shivanshu Rajput. Acting on intelligence inputs, police teams launched simultaneous searches at multiple locations linked to known offenders and suspected criminal hideouts. The operation covered sensitive localities under Andersonpet Police Station limits, including Susepalya, Sorekai Pete, and nearby areas identified as high-risk zones. Authorities confirmed that the homes of ten identified rowdy sheeters were thoroughly searched during the early morning operation. To ensure maximum efficiency and prevent possible escape or communication between suspects, a specially formed police task force was deployed. The team included five Sub-Inspectors and five Inspectors, with each unit assigned specific targets to execute simultaneous raids across different locations.

During the searches, police recovered several deadly weapons from the residences of two individuals identified as rowdy sheeters.

The seized items included long-bladed weapons, machetes, and other sharp-edged instruments, raising serious concerns regarding potential planned criminal activity. All recovered weapons were immediately confiscated and taken into police custody for detailed forensic examination and further legal proceedings.

A senior police official stated that the raids were aimed at preventing future crimes and tightening surveillance on habitual offenders. The sudden and well-coordinated operation created a strong impact across the region. Local residents expressed relief and support, stating that such surprise inspections are necessary to control gang-related violence, extortion activities, and street-level intimidation.

Officials indicated that surveillance on known offenders will now be intensified. Based on the recovery of weapons and evidence gathered during the raids, further legal action and possible preventive detentions are expected in the coming days.

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## QUICK READ

### Delhi HC allows blind interfaith couple to live together

New Delhi
The Delhi High Court has allowed a visually impaired interfaith couple to live together, upholding their right to choose. The woman told the court she wants to stay with her partner and marry him, and is a major. The court noted her clear consent and dismissed objections from her family. It also ordered police protection to ensure their safe movement and living arrangement. The couple had alleged family pressure and confinement earlier. Officials were directed to provide immediate help if needed. The ruling highlights personal liberty and the right to make life choices freely.

### Final group of Haj pilgrims leave Vijayawada

Vijayawada
The second and final group of pilgrims from Vijayawada departed for Saudi Arabia to perform Haj. A total of 177 pilgrims left by flight, after the first group of 156 travelled a day earlier. State Minority Welfare Minister N.M.D. Farooq flagged off the journey and wished them a safe and peaceful pilgrimage. Officials said special arrangements were made for travel, food, and accommodation. In total, 2,005 pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh will travel this year. Authorities assured full support and safety for all pilgrims during the holy journey.

### Two Indians shot dead outside gurdwara in Italy

**Rome**
Two Indian men were shot dead in Covo outside a gurdwara in a shocking attack. The victims were identified as Raginder Singh and Gurmit Singh. Police said the attacker fired multiple rounds before fleeing in a car, and a third person was lightly injured. The incident occurred near Bergamo and is being treated as a planned killing. Authorities are reviewing CCTV footage and questioning witnesses. The local Sikh community expressed shock, while officials said the group had lived peacefully in the area for years.

# India-Germany to shore up defence ties

Defense Min Rajnath Singh will visit Germany this week; By working together, the two countries hope to make new defense tools as a team

**NEW DELHI**

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh will travel to Germany this week to strengthen military ties between the two nations. This three-day trip, starting April 21, marks the first time an Indian Defense Minister has visited Germany in seven years.

The visit is a big step for both countries. Singh will meet with German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius to discuss working together on new technology. They plan to talk about high-tech tools like drones, artificial intelligence, and cyber security. This meeting follows a visit by Pistorius to India last year, showing that both sides are eager to grow their partnership.

A major goal of the trip is to encourage German companies to build military equipment in India. Singh will meet with industry leaders to promote the "Make-in-India" plan. By working together, the two countries hope to design and create new defense tools as a team.

During the visit, officials are expected to sign two important agreements. One is a "roadmap" for how their defense industries will work together. The other focuses on training for United Nations peacekeeping missions.

These deals aim to help both nations contribute more to global peace and stability.

India and Germany have long been partners based on shared values like democracy. With this visit, they are making it clear that keeping their citizens safe through modern technology is a top priority for the future.

## COURT TO HEAR RAHUL GANDHI ON CITIZENSHIP CASE

**LUCKNOW**

The Allahabad High Court is expected to hear Rahul Gandhi's side of a legal dispute. A member of the BJP filed a petition claiming the Congress leader holds British citizenship. If true, this would mean he has dual citizenship, which is not allowed for Indian lawmakers or election candidates.

The case took a sharp turn over the weekend. The court initially told the police they could start an investigation and file a report if necessary. However, Justice Subhash Vidyarthi changed that order. He decided that the law requires a person to be heard before a court orders a criminal investigation against them. This change follows a previous legal ruling that protects the rights of those being accused.The person who started the case, Vignesh Shishir, claims he has documents from the United Kingdom proving Gandhi is a British national. He wants the leader punished under several laws, including the Passport Act. This is not the first time this issue has come up. Back in 2019, the Supreme Court dismissed a similar case that tried to stop Gandhi from running for office.

Currently, the High Court is waiting for all legal teams to discuss whether a formal notice must be sent to Gandhi first. The outcome of the hearing is very important. It will decide if the Uttar Pradesh police will move forward with a full probe into the allegations or if the case will be paused again.

# Stalin unveils bold 'Super-6' plan for Chennai

**CHENNAI**

**Chief Minister MK Stalin's "Chennai Super-6" vision promises a massive ₹10K crore urban transformation into a world-class tech hub.**

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has launched a major new vision for Chennai as state elections approach. Dubbed the "Chennai Super-6," the manifesto promises to turn the city into a world-class tech and living hub through six key areas of urban transformation.

At the heart of the plan is a massive ₹10,000 crore investment to build a global center for Artificial Intelligence, gaming, and visual effects. This project alone aims to create 20,000 high-paying jobs for local youth. To support this growth, the government plans to turn Chennai into a "Global Talent Gateway" for technology and research.

For everyday residents, the focus is on fixing long-standing urban headaches. To solve traffic woes, Stalin promised 1,000 new mini-buses to help people reach metro and train stations from their doorsteps. High-tech AI traffic lights will also be installed to cut travel time by 25%.

The plan sets strict deadlines for big projects, the Chennai Peripheral Road must be finished by 2027, followed by expanded metro lines and better storm drains by 2028. Families in public housing will see upgraded facilities, and areas without piped water will receive RO-purified drinking water.

Safety is also a priority, with high-intensity street lights for all neighborhoods and a new "humane" scientific plan to manage stray dogs by tripling the number of vets. From a world-class cultural center for music and arts to wider, shaded footpaths, the manifesto aims to make Chennai a more comfortable and modern place for everyone to live.

## New Ganga Ghat opens for pilgrims

**UTTARAKHAND**

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami celebrated a major spiritual milestone today at the opening of the Akhand Paramdham Ganga Ghat. The ceremony took place during the holy festival of Akshaya Tritiya. It also honored the 71st anniversary of Swami Parmanand Giri joining the priesthood.The Chief Minister welcomed saints and visitors from all over India. He described the new riverfront area as more than just a construction project. To him, it represents the lasting strength of India's deep spiritual history and culture. Dhami praised Swami Parmanand Giri for a life built on sacrifice and service to others. He also noted that religious leaders help guide the nation toward kindness and unity.The state has big plans for the future. Dhami shared his goal to make Uttarakhand the spiritual capital of the entire world. To do this, the government is improving famous sites like Kedarnath and Badrinath. They are also building new corridors in Haridwar and Rishikesh to make travel easier for everyone.Education is also a priority, with a new center for Hindu studies opening at Doon University. The Chief Minister also spoke about new laws designed to protect the state's heritage.Finally, Dhami announced the start of the famous Char Dham Yatra. As the gates to the holy shrines open,

he promised that the government has made everything ready.

## Fuel crisis leaves drivers stranded in Kanchipuram

**KANCHIPURAM**

A severe shortage of LPG has brought life to a standstill for thousands of auto-rickshaw drivers in the temple town of Kanchipuram. Over the last few days, refueling stations have seen lines of vehicles stretching for kilometers, forcing drivers to abandon their passengers to wait for fuel.

The crisis began roughly four days ago. Drivers, who rely on LPG to keep their vehicles running cheaply and cleanly, report starting their day as early as 4:00 AM just to secure a spot in line. "I have been waiting for hours," said Jagannathan, a local driver. "Our daily earnings have vanished. We are struggling to support our families."

The shortage appears to be a direct fallout of escalating conflict in West Asia. Iran's Revolutionary Guard recently announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for global energy supplies. Iran claims the move is a response to violations of a ceasefire with the U.S. and Israel.This global bottleneck has hit Kanchipuram hard because a massive number of local autos have recently switched from petrol to LPG to save money and reduce pollution. Without a steady supply, these drivers are now stranded.The long queues have not only hurt livelihoods but are also causing massive traffic jams across the town. Drivers are now calling on the government to find a quick solution before the local transport system collapses entirely.

## Election body targets fake AI content online

**NEW DELHI**

The Election Commission of India (ECI) issued a stern warning against using fake AI-generated videos and photos to trick voters. As major elections approach in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, officials are cracking down on "deepfakes" and manipulated media. So far, the ECI has successfully removed over 11,000 illegal social media posts since mid-March.

The poll panel made it clear that any digital content created with AI must be clearly labeled. Parties and candidates must use tags like "AI-Generated" or "Digitally Enhanced" so voters know what is real and what is synthetic. The goal is to keep the elections fair and transparent. Monitoring teams are working around the clock to spot posts that spread lies or could cause public unrest.

Speed is a major part of this new strategy. Social media companies have been told they must act within just three hours once a fake post is reported. Beyond the 11,000 removals, the ECI has also filed several police reports and issued public corrections to stop false rumors from spreading.

Citizens are also playing a huge role in cleaning up the digital space. Using the "C-Vigil" mobile app, people have filed over 320,000 complaints about election rule-breaking. Impressively, 96% of these issues were fixed in less than 100 minutes. With voting set for April 23 and 29, the government is determined to protect the truth until the final results are counted on May 4.

## Manipur protests erupt after deadly bombing attack

**IMPHAL**

Security forces used tear gas to break up crowds in Imphal West as anger over a recent bomb attack reached a boiling point. The protests centered in the Khurai Lamlong area, where people gathered to demand justice for a family devastated by violence earlier this month.

The unrest stems from an attack on April 7 in the Tronglaobi area. During that night, a bomb was thrown into a local family's home while they slept.

The explosion killed two young siblings, a five year old boy and his five month old sister. Their mother was also badly hurt. The children's grandfather, Oinam Babuton, recently told reporters that the family has refused government money. He explained that cash cannot replace human life and that they only want the killers caught.

In response to the tragedy, a local women's group called Meira Paibi Lup has started a seven day total shutdown of the state.

*Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inspected Bhubaneswar's airport-like makeover, part of a massive 1,300-station national infrastructure upgrade plan*

## New hub makes travel easy for everyone

**BHUBANESWAR**

The way we travel by train is getting a major facelift. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw visited the Bhubaneswar Railway Station to check on its big makeover. He walked through the building and spoke with travelers to see if the changes are actually helping.The Minister compared the new station to a modern airport. It features a large, elevated waiting area called a concourse, giving passengers plenty of space to relax before their journey. "I spoke with many passengers, and they are very happy," Vaishnaw said. "They told me that moving around the station is now much easier."

This project is part of a massive national plan called the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. The government is currently fixing up more than 1,300 stations across India to ensure they stay useful for the next 50 years. In Odisha alone, 59 stations including Cuttack and Puri are on the list for upgrades.These "new-age" stations will offer more than just train tracks.

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**'CHILLING' REALITY**

## *Tourist rush hits Nilgiris as mercury rises*

**OOTY**

The cool hills of the Nilgiris are seeing a massive wave of visitors this week as the summer season kicks off.

Tourists from all over Tamil Nadu and nearby states are flooding into Ooty to escape the heat. However, this popularity has brought a familiar problem - heavy traffic. Long lines of cars are now a common sight on the winding mountain roads.

The congestion is especially bad because most families are traveling in their own private cars. Key spots in Ooty, like Charing Cross and ATC Road, have seen traffic slow to a crawl. Local police are working hard to keep vehicles moving, but the sheer number of visitors makes it difficult. With schools now closed for the summer, the crowds are only expected to grow.

The timing adds to the rush. Ooty is about to host its famous annual summer festival. This includes the popular flower show, fruit displays, and vegetable exhibitions. These events always attract thousands of extra people to the hill station. To handle the pressure, district officials are asking tourists to leave their cars at their hotels. They are encouraging everyone to use the special tourist buses and local transport instead.

Tourism officials warn that the next few weeks will be the busiest of the year.

They are advising travelers to plan their trips carefully and avoid driving during the most crowded times of the day.

For now, managing the record breaking number of guests remains the biggest challenge for the local government.

## QUICK READ

### Vedanta plant blast death toll climbs higher

**Raipur**

The death toll in the Vedanta power plant blast has risen to 24 after an injured worker died in hospital. The victim, Manish Kumar from Jharkhand, was among 36 labourers hurt in the April 14 explosion. Officials said several injured workers are still under treatment, with some in critical condition. The blast occurred due to a high-pressure boiler issue, with early findings pointing to safety lapses. Investigation teams are examining records and questioning staff. Authorities assured support to families, while the tragedy has raised fresh concerns over industrial safety standards.

### Fire breaks out near Mumbai central shops

**Mumbai**

A Level-I fire broke out near Mumbai Central, damaging several shops and rooms in a chawl. No injuries were reported. Officials said the blaze likely started due to an electrical short circuit. Firefighters and civic teams rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control after hours of effort. Some parts of the building were found unsafe and may be demolished. Authorities said cooling operations will continue. The incident caused heavy damage but relief prevailed as residents stayed safe and avoided any loss of life.

### Armed robbery nets crores from bank branch

**Singrauli**

Armed robbers looted over Rs 15 crore from a Bank of Maharashtra branch in Singrauli, police said. Five masked men stole gold and cash, causing panic in the area. Around 10 kg of gold and cash were taken during the daytime heist. Police have detained two suspects and launched searches across states to catch the others. Special teams are tracking the accused using CCTV and leads. Officials said all suspects have been identified.

### Police nab gang members after early hour encounter

**New Delhi**

Delhi Police arrested two suspected members of the Lagarpuria gang after a brief gunfight in the Shyam Vihar area. Acting on a tip-off, the Dwarka Anti-Auto Theft Squad intercepted the accused riding a motorcycle. One suspect opened fire, but police responded and injured him in the leg before arresting both. Officers recovered pistols, live cartridges, and the bike used in the crime.

# Kolkata bizman detained in major money crackdown

The ED detained businessman Joy Kamdar in Kolkata following raids targeting a massive money laundering and criminal extortion syndicate.

**KOLKATA**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) took a major step in a sweeping investigation into illegal money networks.

Officials detained Joy Kamdar, the head of Sun Enterprise, following a raid at his home in South Kolkata's Behala neighborhood.

The move is part of a larger probe into money laundering linked to a known criminal, Biswajit Poddar, better known as "Sona Pappu." Investigators also searched two properties belonging to a high-ranking Kolkata Police official, Deputy Commissioner Shantanu Sinha Biswas. According to the ED, these raids are tied to a massive organized crime syndicate accused of generating illegal funds through extortion and real estate pressure.

During the search at Kamdar's residence, officers reportedly recovered a stash of cash. This wasn't the first time the businessman had been under the microscope; he had ignored two previous summons for questioning. His name surfaced recently during a separate raid on Sona Pappu's property earlier this month.Poddar, who is currently hiding from the law, allegedly runs powerful syndicates that extort money from construction companies. Officials believe this "syndicate money" was then funneled to influential figures. While Poddar remains at large, even posting on social media to criticize investigators and the ED is tightening the net. Previous raids in this case have already turned up nearly 1.5 crore rupees in cash, gold jewelry, and even an illegal firearm. The agency remains focused on tracing how these criminal funds were "cleaned" through local businesses.

# Padma Shri 'Dau' passes away in Bhopal

**Bundelkhand mourns Padma Shri awardee Bhagwandas Raikwar, the legendary "Dau" who revived the ancient art of lathi fighting and trained over a thousand dedicated students.**

**BHOPAL**

The heart of Bundelkhand is heavy, as the region mourns its beloved guardian, Bhagwandas Raikwar. Known affectionately as "Dau," the 83-year-old Padma Shri awardee passed away at AIIMS Bhopal.

He had been fighting a long battle with respiratory illness, but his spirit remained as strong as the traditions he spent a lifetime protecting.

Raikwar was much more than a teacher, he was the soul of the traditional "akhada" culture. In 1964, with very little money but immense passion, he founded the Chhatrasal Bundelkhand Akhada in Sagar. He refused to let the ancient art of "lathi" fighting fade into history. Instead, he personally trained over a thousand students, transforming a local war art into an internationally recognized discipline. Because of his tireless work, the Central government honored him with the prestigious Padma Shri award just this past January.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav led the tributes, noting that Raikwar brought global pride to Madhya Pradesh. When his health began to fail, he was moved from local care to Bhopal, where he remained on a ventilator until the end. His final journey concluded with full state honors at Naryawali Naka Muktidham, attended by those who saw him as a father figure of sports.

Dau's legacy lives on in the rhythmic strike of the lathi and the dusty floors of the akhadas he saved. He didn't just teach self-defense, he taught a community how to stand tall and keep its heritage alive.

*The sacred Kedarnath "Doli" has begun its majestic Himalayan procession, marking the official launch of the Char Dham Yatra.*

# THOUSANDS JOIN SACRED JOURNEY TO HIMALAYAN SHRINE

**NEW DELHI**

The air in the Himalayas turned electric as the sacred "Doli" of Lord Kedarnath began its annual journey. Leaving the winter home at Omkareshwar Temple in Ukhimath, the five-faced idol of the deity was carried in a grand palanquin, marking the official start of the summer pilgrimage season.

The temple was a sight to behold, draped in nearly 800 kilograms of vibrant flowers. As the procession moved, the sounds of Vedic chants mixed with the rhythmic beats of a Garhwal Rifles military band, creating a powerful blend of spiritual and national pride. Thousands of pilgrims from across India gathered, some joining the walk for the first time and others returning for their fifth year to feel the unique energy of the "padyatra."

"Being here is a different world compared to watching it on a screen," shared one 67-year-old devotee. The journey is not just a walk but a centuries-old tradition that connects the local culture with millions of faithful followers. Along the route, community feasts were organized to feed the sea of devotees who followed the palanquin with unwavering devotion.

The Doli will rest at Phata and Gaurikund before reaching its final destination on April 21. This sacred trek leads up to the grand opening of the Kedarnath Temple doors, scheduled for 8:00 AM on April 22. With the gates of Gangotri and Yamunotri also opening, the beloved Char Dham Yatra has officially called its pilgrims home.

### Strict safety rules as Kedarnath Helicopter services begin

RUDRAPRAYAG

Helicopter services for the Kedarnath pilgrimage will start from April 22, with tighter safety rules this year. Authorities have completed preparations and aim to make travel safer and more organised for devotees. Flights will operate from Guptkashi, Phata, and Sersi helipads in the valley. Eight companies have been allowed to run services. To avoid crowding in the sky, a fixed number of shuttle flights has been set for each location. Control rooms at Sonprayag and Kedarnath will guide pilots with live weather updates and traffic details. Officials said strict action will be taken against any violations. The state also plans round-the-clock hot water using eco-friendly geysers during the yatra. The temple doors will open on April 22, drawing excited pilgrims to the holy site. Officials said arrangements are in stages and security teams are ready to manage crowds and ensure a smooth pilgrimage experience for visitors.

# Police arrest 6 drug peddlers in Anantnag

**SRINAGAR**

Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district made a major breakthrough, arresting six alleged drug peddlers during an intensified crackdown. The operation resulted in the recovery of over 3.7 kilograms of various narcotics and over 10,000 rupees in cash.

The success came through three separate police operations focused on stopping the flow of illegal substances. In the first incident at Danter, four men tried to flee when they spotted a police checkpoint. Officers quickly caught three of them, finding over three kilograms of ganja powder and cash in their possession. While three suspects were taken into custody, one man managed to escape the scene and is currently being sought by investigators.In a second operation at Marhama Crossing, police intercepted a vehicle and discovered quantities of brown sugar and charas. Two residents from the Chadoora area were arrested on the spot. A third bust in the Waghama region led to the arrest of another local man found carrying nearly half a kilogram of charas powder.

Local police emphasized their "zero-tolerance" policy regarding the drug trade, stating that these arrests are part of a larger mission to protect the youth from addiction. Officials have urged the public to come forward with any information about drug activity, promising that the identity of informants will remain strictly confidential. As investigations continue, the police remain committed to dismantling the networks that bring these harmful substances into the community.

# Sukma tamarind goes global while new labs launch

**SUKMA**

The tangy organic tamarind of Bastar is making a major move from local forests to international shelves. Under the new "Dandakaranya Foods" initiative, a high-tech processing center in Sukma is now turning raw tamarind into premium branded products. The project aims to put Sukma on the global map while providing steady jobs for local women who collect and process the fruit."Our goal is to build a powerful identity for Sukma's tamarind," said Kailash Kumar Kashyap, a local trade official. He credited the state's leadership for focusing on rural livelihoods and empowering "sisters" in the community through these forest-based businesses.

The region also received a major healthcare boost. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai inaugurated the "Atal Arogya Lab" at the Sukma District Hospital. This ambitious scheme offers 133 different medical tests completely free of cost. The service is being rolled out across more than 1,000 government hospitals and clinics statewide.

Dr. M.R. Kashyap, a senior surgeon at the hospital, noted that the arrival of advanced machinery has revolutionized their diagnostic power. "With these new labs, we can identify diseases much earlier," he said. The initiative is a lifeline for remote communities, ensuring that high-quality healthcare is no longer a luxury but a free right for every citizen in Chhattisgarh.

# Odisha becomes new hub for computer chips

**BHUBANESWAR**

It marks a turning point for Odisha as the state officially begins its journey into the high-tech world of computer chips. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw called this a "historic day," noting that the region is quickly transforming into a major center for IT and electronics.The foundation for a new semiconductor plant, led by the global firm 3DGS, was laid recently. This move signals a shift for Odisha, moving beyond its traditional roots in metals and minerals toward advanced technology. Backed by giant investors like Intel and Lockheed Martin, the new facility will bring world-class manufacturing to the doorsteps of local residents.Odisha isn't just getting one factory, it is becoming a powerhouse. Along with 3DGS, another company called SiCSem is building India's first commercial site for special "Silicon Carbide" chips.

### Top bank officials caught in bribery trap

**ELURU**

In a shocking turn of events that has sent ripples through the local business community, the CBI arrested three employees of a local Indian Bank branch. The arrests took place after the officials were allegedly caught red-handed accepting a bribe to maintain a businessman's credit limit.

The federal agency identified the arrested individuals as Chief Manager Banavatu Nagu, Clerk-cum-Cashier Annumalasetty N. Kumar, and Gold Appraiser Krishna Prasad.

CATALYZING GROWTH

# *NEW ROADS, BRIDGES LINK BORDER TOWNS*

**RAJOURI**

A wave of modern infrastructure is transforming life in the border sub-division of Nowshera.

For the first time in nearly forty decades, residents are seeing narrow, congested dirt paths replaced by wide, double-lane paved roads. One major highlight is a new three-kilometer highway, built with an eight-crore rupee investment, designed to unlock the region's economic potential. The transformation goes beyond just asphalt. A long-awaited bridge connecting Nowshera to the Seri Block is moving toward completion, finally linking two areas that were historically cut off. Local families say the changes are a lifesaver, patients can now reach hospitals faster, and students no longer face grueling commutes to school. "We haven't seen this level of work in forty years," one local resident noted, crediting the speed of the projects to focused leadership from Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary.

While the roads connect people, the "Umeed" program is connecting livelihoods. Part of a national mission, the initiative has already organized 9,000 local members into over 1,000 self-help groups. By combining better transport with financial support for small businesses, officials hope to turn these border areas into thriving hubs of trade. With blacktopped roads now reaching deep into the hills, the people of Rajouri are looking toward a future of better jobs and smoother journeys.

| PROJECT TYPE | KEY DETAIL | IMPACT |
|---|---|---|
| Main Highway | 3 km length / 10m width | Reduces traffic congestion in Nowshera |
| Budget | ₹8 crore | Largest infrastructure spend in 40 years |
| Bridges | Nowshera-Seri Link | Connects previously isolated border blocks |
| Livelihood | 1,100 Self-Help Groups | Boosts local employment and trade |

## QUICK READ

### Night fishing ban deepens Balochistan crisis

**Islamabad**

Fishermen in Gwadar are facing growing hardship after authorities imposed a night fishing ban across coastal areas. Officials said the restriction was introduced due to security concerns, covering key zones near ports and coast guard camps. Fishermen say the decision is worsening their already fragile income and livelihoods. Many also demanded action against illegal trawling, which they say harms local fishing. Security has been tightened in the region following recent militant-related incidents. Residents fear more restrictions and detentions, while authorities continue patrols and monitoring along the coastline amid ongoing tensions and safety concerns in the area.

### Houthis raise alert over Yemen conflict tensions

**Sanaa**

The Houthis have declared a high state of alert, warning they are ready to respond to any perceived aggression against Yemen. Their defence minister said recent conflicts showed strong coordination among allied forces. Another senior leader warned that the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, a key global shipping route, could be blocked if tensions continue. The strait connects major sea trade paths between Asia, Africa, and Europe. Officials also issued warnings to foreign powers over regional policies. The situation has raised global concern due to its potential impact on trade and maritime security routes.

### Chinese robot smashes half marathon record globally

**Beijing**

A humanoid robot named Flash, developed by Shenzhen Honor Smart Technology Development Co., Ltd, completed a half-marathon in 50 minutes and 26 seconds in Beijing E-Town Half Marathon, finishing ahead of human competitors. The robot ran autonomously using navigation systems and impressed spectators. The time is faster than the human world record of 57:20 set by Jacob Kiplimo. The event included amateur runners alongside robots, highlighting China's progress in robotics and AI. Officials said the achievement shows rapid technological growth, though the robot competed separately from official human rankings. No injuries or disruptions were reported.

# UN condemns fatal attack on French peacekeepers

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned a deadly attack on French peacekeepers in Lebanon, warning it may be a war crime.

**UNITED NATIONS**

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned a deadly attack that killed one French peacekeeper in southern Lebanon.

Three other UN soldiers were injured when their team came under fire while investigating reports of roadside bombs. The UNIFIL force believes the attackers were members of Hezbollah, a non-state group active in the region.

Guterres warned that targeting peacekeepers is a serious violation of international law and may be considered a war crime. He demanded a fast investigation to find and punish those responsible. This tragedy is especially shocking because it happened during a 10 day ceasefire. This is now the third time in just a few weeks that UN peacekeepers have been killed in the area.

While a truce was supposed to be in place, the situation on the ground remains very tense. The Israeli military reported that it struck militants near the border zone. At the same time, witnesses say the Israeli army has started building a new military site near the village of Kfarchouba.

The UN chief sent his deepest sympathies to the fallen soldier's family and the people of France. He urged all sides to stop fighting immediately and respect the safety of UN staff. As the region waits to see if the ceasefire will hold, the UN remains focused on protecting its personnel and maintaining peace along the border.

*The USS Rushmore is leading blockade operations in the Arabian Sea to secure shipping lanes and prevent illegal weapon transport.*

## Navy ship patrols waters to keep peace

**ARABIAN SEA**

The USS Rushmore is currently leading critical blockade operations in the Arabian Sea to ensure regional security.

As part of the US Central Command's ongoing mission, the massive amphibious ship is patrolling busy shipping lanes to prevent the illegal transport of weapons and dangerous materials.

These operations are a key part of keeping international waters open and safe for trade. By monitoring suspicious vessels, the crew of the Rushmore helps stop conflict before it starts. The ship acts as a floating base, using its advanced sensors and highly trained teams to scan the horizon for any signs of trouble.

"Our presence here is about more than just a show of force," noted a Navy official. "It's about protecting the global economy and supporting our partners in the region." The Arabian Sea is a vital path for oil and goods traveling between East and West, making any disruption a worldwide concern.

Life on the Rushmore during these missions is intense. Sailors work around the clock, launching small boats and helicopters to inspect ships that might be breaking international laws. Despite the long hours and high stakes, morale remains high among the crew, who take pride in their role as guardians of the sea.

As the mission continues, the USS Rushmore remains a steady symbol of stability. Its work ensures that the world's most important waterways stay clear, allowing the global community to move forward without fear of interference or hidden threats.

## North Korea launches multiple missiles toward East sea

**North Korea fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles from Sinpho into the East Sea, prompting high alert and condemnation from South Korean and U.S. intelligence officials.**

**SEOUL**

North Korea launched several short-range ballistic missiles into the East Sea. South Korea's military first noticed the weapons at about 6:10 a.m. The missiles were fired from the Sinpho region and traveled roughly 140 kilometers before landing in the water.

Military experts are looking closely at whether these were submarine-launched missiles. This is because Sinpho is a major base for North Korean submarines. The North has tested similar weapons there in the past, including a major launch in 2022. Just last week, the North claimed it was testing new technology, including cluster bombs and weapons designed to disable electronics.

South Korean and U.S. intelligence teams are working together to study the flight data. They have also shared their findings with the Japanese military. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that they are prepared to respond to any further "provocations" with overwhelming force.

In response to the launch, South Korea's national security leaders held an emergency meeting. They condemned the act, calling it a direct violation of United Nations rules. Officials are urging North Korea to stop these missile tests immediately. They warned that these constant launches only increase tension on the Korean Peninsula and make it harder to find a path toward lasting peace. For now, the South Korean military remains on high alert, watching for any more unusual movements from the North.

## Lee vows to defend South Korean democracy

**SEOUL**

President Lee Jae Myung marked the 66th anniversary of a historic student-led uprising by promising to protect the nation from future dictatorships. Speaking at a national cemetery, Lee honored the heroes of the 1960 revolution that toppled the country's first president, Rhee Syng-man, after a rigged election.

Lee connected the courage of those 1960 protesters to more recent events. He specifically compared their fight to the public resistance against a failed martial law attempt in late 2024. According to Lee, the "loud cry" of the people is what consistently saves the country from leaders who try to overstep their power. He noted that the spirit of democracy is now part of the "DNA" of every South Korean citizen.

During his emotional speech, Lee argued that democracy is most at risk when people face poverty and inequality. He stated that a government's only true job is to look after the daily lives of its people. By improving the economy and protecting freedom, he believes the country can stay strong against any "anti-democratic forces" that might try to return.

The April 19 Revolution remains a defining moment in South Korean history. Hundreds of students and civilians were killed or hurt in 1960 while fighting for fair elections. Lee offered his deep condolences to the families of those lost, vowing that their sacrifice would never be forgotten as the nation builds a brighter, more equal future for the next generation.

## Bulgarians vote in 8th election in five years

**SOFIA**

Bulgarians returned to the polls for the eighth time in just five years, hoping to finally end a long streak of political instability. Nearly 6.6 million citizens are eligible to vote for a new 240-seat parliament after the previous government collapsed under the weight of massive public protests.

The country has been stuck in a cycle of "snap" elections since 2021. The latest crisis began in December 2025, when Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov's coalition resigned due to anger over his economic policies. Since then, several political groups have tried and failed to form a new leadership team. This gridlock forced the nation into today's early vote, overseen by a temporary caretaker government.

More than 4,700 candidates from various parties are competing for seats. Beyond those voting at home, polling stations have been set up in 55 countries to allow Bulgarians living abroad to have their say. Voters have until 8 p.m. local time to cast their ballots, with early results expected shortly after the doors close.

The stakes are high for this Balkan nation. Many citizens are frustrated by the constant voting and the lack of a steady government to handle rising costs and economic reforms. Political experts warn that if no clear winner emerges, the country could face even more uncertainty. The final, official results of the election must be announced by April 23, revealing whether Bulgaria can finally move toward a stable future.

## India nears major win for nuke power

**NEW DELHI**

India is closer than ever to total energy independence thanks to a massive breakthrough in its nuclear program.

According to new eports, the nation has reached a "turning point" that could finally allow it to stop relying on other countries for fuel.

For decades, India has faced a big problem, it has very little uranium, which is the fuel most nuclear plants need. To solve this, India's top scientists created a long-term plan to use thorium. While India is short on uranium, it holds 25% of the world's thorium buried in its own sands. The catch? Thorium is hard to use and takes decades to prepare.

The big news happened at the Kalpakkam nuclear plant, where a special "Fast Breeder Reactor" finally started its main power process, known as criticality. This is a huge deal because these specific reactors are incredibly complex, so complex that most other countries gave up on building them years ago. India, however, stayed the course.

## Exile leaders slam China's 'state-sponsored mass slavery'

**WASHINGTON D.C**

The East Turkistan Government in Exile issued a report accusing China of transforming its alleged "genocide" into a structured system of mass forced labor. Citing whistleblower testimony, the group claims millions of Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities are trapped in labor programs tied to the country's cotton industry.

The allegations are supported by Zhang Yabo, who served in the region for nearly a decade. He described detainees being transferred from secret "reeducation camps" into prisons or forced work crews, along with claims of torture and deaths in custody. The group also alleges that officials ordered the destruction of camp records in 2020 to conceal evidence from international scrutiny.

ETGE President Mamtimin Ala said the system has expanded rather than ended. The United Nations has warned such practices may amount to crimes against humanity. The group urged the International Criminal Court and global governments to intervene and restrict imports linked to forced labor.

## SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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| 9 | | 8 | 4 | | 5 | 1 | 2 | |
| 3 | 7 | | 1 | 2 | | | | 4 |
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| | | 1 | | 5 | | | 6 | |
| | 3 | 6 | | 1 | 9 | 8 | 4 | |
| | 5 | 4 | 2 | | 3 | 6 | 1 | |
| | 1 | 9 | 6 | 8 | | 4 | 3 | |
| 6 | | 3 | 5 | 4 | | 2 | | 9 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 6 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 2 |
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| 2 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 9 |
| 9 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 5 |
| 4 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 3 |
| 8 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| 6 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 8 |

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

**Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.**

JAIL CARE DISPUTE

## *Bushra seeks sentence suspension on medical grounds*

**ISLAMABAD**

Bushra Bibi, the wife of former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, has asked the court to pause her prison sentence.

Her legal team filed an urgent request, citing serious health concerns following a recent eye surgery conducted under what they call "mysterious" circumstances.

Earlier this week, authorities moved the former first lady to a private hospital for a procedure on her retina. While jail officials claim she was returned to a cell after one night, her family says they were never told about the operation beforehand. They are worried about the lack of transparency regarding her medical care behind bars.

Her lawyer, Salman Safdar, is now asking the Islamabad High Court to step in. The request asks that she be moved back to the hospital for proper recovery. Her team argues that her health is fading and that keeping her in jail during this time would cause permanent harm. They also want the court to summon the doctors and jail staff to explain why the family was kept in the dark.

This plea comes as her appeal against a seven-year sentence remains stuck in the legal system. Her lawyers believe she deserves to recover in a safe environment with access to her own doctors and family members. The court is expected to hear more about her condition on April 22. For now, the focus remains on whether the court will choose medical mercy over continued time behind bars.

## IMF loan terms putting Bangladesh at risk

**DHAKA**

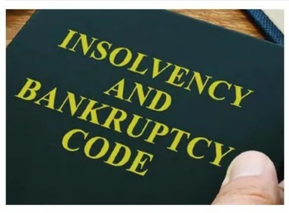
A top advisor to the Prime Minister warned that Bangladesh is becoming a "hostage" to tough loan conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir cautioned that these strict rules could cause the country's economic growth to crash below 3 percent while making life much harder for everyday citizens.

During a seminar in Dhaka, Titumir explained that the IMF is pushing for "textbook" reforms that don't fit the local reality. One major concern is the demand to raise taxes and cut subsidies. While these goals sound good on paper, Titumir argues they will trigger high inflation, hurting farmers and low-income families who rely on government support to survive.

The advisor criticized global institutions for being inconsistent. He noted that while they acknowledge poverty is rising, they still tell the government to stop spending money on the public. He described the current economy as fragile, blaming past leadership for leaving behind weak institutions and a stagnant landscape for investors.

Adding to the worry, other experts warned that Bangladesh is spending more on debt interest than on education. This could lead to a "debt trap," where the country is so busy paying back loans that it cannot afford to grow. Titumir called for creative, local solutions instead of following rigid foreign formulas. He emphasized that the government must find ways to boost private investment and use its own funds better to keep the economy from sliding further into crisis.

## QUICK READ




### IBC strengthens biz recovery, needs faster implementation

**New Delhi**

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has significantly transformed the handling of business failures in India by ensuring timely resolution and preserving asset value, experts said at a PHDCCI conference on Sunday. Sanjay Singhania noted that the Code has improved credit discipline and boosted investor confidence, though faster processes and flexibility remain necessary. Speakers highlighted the impact of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Act, 2026, which introduces provisions like group and cross-border insolvency. Justice Rakesh Kumar Jain emphasised the shift to a unified, creditor-driven system, while Ashok Kumar Bhardwaj underlined the need for continuous evolution. Experts also called for AI-driven mediation and stronger information systems to reduce delays and enhance transparency, especially for MSMEs.

### 'Rising global unrest signals early stages of a potential world war'

**New Delhi**

US hedge fund billionaire Ray Dalio has cautioned that escalating tensions involving the US, Israel and Iran may signal early stages of a potential world war. In a post on X, Dalio described a historical "Big Cycle," placing the current global situation at a critical stage where major conflicts and alliances are intensifying. He noted that ongoing disputes across regions, including Europe and the Middle East, mirror patterns seen before past world wars. Dalio warned of rising nationalism, suppression of dissent, and possible direct clashes between major powers, followed by economic strain through increased debt and financial controls. Highlighting shifting alliances, he urged investors to closely track global partnerships, stressing their importance in shaping future geopolitical and economic outcomes.

### Budget 2026-27 boosts high-value agriculture strategy

**New Delhi**

The Union Budget 2026-27 has marked a strategic shift towards crop-specific and regionally aligned approaches to promote high-value agriculture, the government said on Sunday. India's agricultural sector recorded 4.45 percent growth over the past decade, with the country ranking second globally in coconut production, supporting nearly 30 million livelihoods. Horticulture output rose from 277.35 million tonnes in 2013-14 to 370.74 million tonnes in 2024-25. India also leads global onion production with a 22.42 percent share. Exports of cashew, cocoa and walnuts stood at $369.17 million, $295.58 million and $7.8 million respectively in 2024-25. The budget also focuses on region-specific crops like coconut, cashew, cocoa, sandalwood, agarwood and premium nuts to strengthen exports and farmer incomes, aiming to boost rural prosperity and export competitiveness nationwide.

# India plans massive nuclear power expansion

The country aims to expand its current capacity of 8.8 gigawatts to an ambitious 100 gigawatts by the year 2047

**NEW DELHI**

India is preparing for a major transformation in its energy sector, with plans to increase its nuclear power capacity more than tenfold over the next two decades.

The country aims to expand its current capacity of 8.8 gigawatts to an ambitious 100 gigawatts by the year 2047, according to Ghanshyam Prasad, Chairperson of the Central Electricity Authority.

Speaking during a session on the nation's nuclear energy roadmap in the capital, Prasad emphasized that achieving this target will require consistent effort and accelerated development. He noted that a comprehensive plan has already been developed, detailing the necessary steps to meet the long-term goal. Legislative reforms form a central component of this strategy, laying the groundwork for expansion.

Prasad highlighted that one of the key milestones, the enactment of the Shanti Act, has already been completed. However, he acknowledged that considerable work remains in establishing the rules, procedures, and guidelines required to make the framework fully operational. Authorities are currently working on these aspects, with a strong focus on incorporating feedback from stakeholders to ensure smooth and effective implementation.

In addition to regulatory progress, discussions are ongoing to streamline financial flows and improve policy execution. Efforts are also being made to simplify and standardize processes, making nuclear energy more cost-effective and accessible. Prasad stressed the importance of addressing critical factors such as fuel security, appropriate site selection, and the development of a skilled workforce to support the sector's rapid growth.

Looking ahead, the nuclear energy sector may open up to broader participation. Currently dominated by a single player, it is expected that 10 to 12 companies could enter the market in the coming years, significantly boosting capacity addition.

Prasad also underscored the reliability of nuclear energy, describing it as a stable source of baseload power capable of continuous operation over long periods. He added that, when managed properly, nuclear power remains one of the safest forms of energy generation. Emerging technologies like small modular reactors were also identified as promising developments, though they present both opportunities and challenges as they continue to evolve globally.

# Govt releases funds for rural employment scheme

**NEW DELHI**

**Rs 17,744 crore released to ensure timely rural wage payments and uninterrupted employment nationwide**

The central government has released Rs 17,744.19 crore to states and union territories as the first instalment for the financial year 2026–27 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), aimed at ensuring uninterrupted wage payments and continued rural employment.

The announcement was made by Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who emphasised the importance of efficient utilisation of the allocated funds.

According to the minister, the released amount is specifically designated for the wage component of the scheme, which guarantees employment to rural households. He urged all states to ensure that the funds are used promptly and effectively so that workers receive their wages without delay. Timely payment, he stressed, remains a critical factor in maintaining trust and participation in the programme.

Chouhan also noted that additional financial support is being made available under the material and administrative components of the scheme. These provisions are intended to facilitate the smooth execution of projects and ensure proper management at worksites. He highlighted the need for uninterrupted implementation of NREGA projects at the grassroots level, ensuring that employment opportunities remain consistently available.

The minister reiterated that providing work within the stipulated timeframe is a legal obligation under the scheme. He directed states to guarantee that no worker is left waiting for employment and that sufficient projects are available at the Gram Panchayat level. Furthermore, he called for improved worksite management and emphasised the importance of issuing Job Cards to all eligible rural households that are not yet enrolled.

Chouhan described the current period as a crucial transition phase, during which maintaining employment under NREGA is essential while preparing for upcoming rural development initiatives. He referred to the proposed VB–GRAM G Act, which aims to expand employment guarantees to 125 days per year and create a more robust, empowerment-driven framework for rural development.

He urged states to complete all necessary preparations in a timely manner to ensure the successful rollout of the new programme, while continuing to prioritise livelihoods and economic security for rural families across the country.

# G7 expands critical mineral cooperation Global Alliance

**NEW DELHI**

In a major policy move aimed at reducing global dependence on China for critical minerals, the Group of Seven countries have agreed to deepen cooperation with resource-rich nations and international financial institutions. The decision reflects growing concern over supply chain vulnerabilities and the need for more diversified sources of essential raw materials used in modern industries.

According to reports from a Japan-based national daily, finance ministers from G7 countries reached this agreement during a high-level meeting held in Washington, DC. The discussions included participation from several mineral-producing countries such as Argentina, Australia, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and South Korea. The broad participation highlighted a shared interest in building more resilient and inclusive supply networks for critical minerals.

Japanese Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama emphasized that the talks focused on strengthening global supply chains for essential minerals. She described the initiative as mutually beneficial, stating that it would ensure stable suppliers across a wide range of countries. She further noted that resource-rich nations would gain new opportunities for business development and economic growth through expanded cooperation.

The meeting also included representatives from major international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. According to the report, this initiative differs from earlier United States led approaches. Instead of focusing on trade restrictions or price controls, the current framework is described as more practical and development oriented, aiming to support business projects that benefit all participating parties.

In contrast, the United States proposal reportedly focuses on insulating partner economies from global market fluctuations by establishing reference pricing mechanisms through adjustable tariffs within a defined trade zone.

Meanwhile, India is actively advancing its own strategy to strengthen critical mineral security. The country is increasing exploration activities, encouraging startup participation in the mining sector, and developing strong domestic value chains to reduce import dependence. These efforts are part of a broader national push to secure long term resource availability for industrial growth and clean energy transition.

The Indian government is also working to improve project execution timelines by simplifying approval processes. Special attention is being given to resolving delays caused by forest clearances and inter departmental coordination issues. Authorities emphasize that faster approvals, efficient procurement systems, and timely pre exploration permissions are essential to sustaining momentum in the sector.

# US–Iran truce revives global 'TINA' market rally as investors return to risk assets

**LONDON**

Global financial markets are witnessing a renewed wave of risk-taking following the early April ceasefire between the United States and Iran, as investors increasingly return to so-called "TINA" trades—an acronym for "There Is No Alternative"—reflecting a belief that equities remain the most viable investment option amid uncertain global conditions.

The ceasefire has improved sentiment across major financial centers by easing immediate concerns over a wider Middle East conflict and reducing fears of sustained energy supply disruptions. Combined with strong corporate earnings in the United States and continued momentum in artificial intelligence-related industries, the development has helped restore confidence in global equity markets.

Over the past year, many investors had shifted capital outside the United States in search of better returns, targeting undervalued markets in Europe and Asia. A weakening U.S. dollar had further supported this diversification strategy, making foreign equities more attractive. Markets in cities such as Seoul, Tokyo, Frankfurt, and London benefited from this trend as global capital flowed into regions perceived as offering cheaper valuations and recovery potential.

However, renewed optimism following the ceasefire has reversed part of this movement. U.S. equities, in particular, have regained dominance, with Wall Street indices climbing to record highs in recent weeks. Analysts attribute this rebound not only to geopolitical relief but also to strong corporate earnings growth and continued large-scale government spending, which together have reinforced the resilience of the American economy compared with other global markets.

The earlier phase of conflict had triggered a sharp rise in energy prices, undermining investor confidence and increasing volatility across global markets. Risk assets were broadly sold off as fears grew that escalating tensions could disrupt oil flows and intensify inflationary pressures worldwide. That environment briefly challenged equity valuations and led to a more cautious investment approach across regions.

# Global fin leaders confront rising economic risks at Washington meet

**WASHINGTON**

Global finance leaders gathered in Washington this week during the IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings as escalating conflict in the Middle East exposed limits of global institutions in managing repeated geopolitical shocks. Concerns deepened over weakening growth prospects and declining reliance on United States leadership in crisis response. Brief optimism followed signals from Iran about reopening a key maritime route, but renewed shipping attacks quickly revived fears of prolonged supply chain and energy disruptions.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank pledged up to $150 billion to support developing countries facing rising energy costs, while urging restraint on fuel subsidies and warning against panic stockpiling. Officials noted many critical economic decisions are occurring outside formal multilateral frameworks.

Oil prices fluctuated as disruptions continued, with Saudi Arabia stressing the need for stable shipping routes. Prolonged conflict could push the global economy toward recession, worsening strain on vulnerable nations.

# Experts examine WTO ruling on transnational subsidies, global trade rules

**NEW DELHI**

A recent expert panel discussion in New Delhi brought renewed attention to the legal and policy implications of the World Trade Organization Panel Report on transnational subsidies, particularly under the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures.

The deliberations focused on how the ruling could reshape global trade governance and influence the direction of industrial policy in an increasingly interconnected world economy.

The session was organised by the Centre for Trade and Investment Law at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade in collaboration with the South Asian International Economic Law Network and the Indian Society of International Law. It convened legal scholars, trade experts, and policy specialists to analyse evolving interpretations of subsidy rules under international trade law.

A central focus of the discussion was the WTO dispute concerning European Union Countervailing and Anti-Dumping Duties on Stainless Steel Cold-Rolled Flat Products from Indonesia. Experts examined the European Union's approach of attributing financial contributions from foreign entities, including state-linked actors, to the Indonesian government and treating such contributions as countervailable subsidies. This interpretation sparked debate on how far subsidy rules can extend in a global economy where state and non-state financial flows are increasingly intertwined.

Participants closely analysed the WTO Panel's findings, which clarified that the definition of "financial contribution" under Article 1.1(a)(1) of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures is a closed list. According to the interpretation discussed, this framework does not extend to government-to-government inducements, thereby setting clear boundaries on what can be classified as a subsidy under WTO rules.

The panel also addressed the concept of a "public body," stressing that its determination must rely on a substantive assessment of an entity's functions and its relationship with the state, rather than formal or administrative labels. This distinction was highlighted as crucial for ensuring consistency in subsidy investigations across jurisdictions.

**MARKET GAINS**

# *Equities rise strongly on improving global market cues*

**NEW DELHI**

investors remain focused on developments surrounding negotiations between the United States and Iran, movements in global crude oil prices, and fourth quarter FY26 earnings commentary as they assess market direction this week, analysts said on Sunday.

Market participants noted softer crude prices, improving global sentiment, and stable flows are supporting recovery in Indian equities, though a follow-through buying is needed to confirm a durable uptrend even as easing Middle East tensions support sentiment.

Analysts said downside risks appear limited while upside momentum is building, suggesting a shift toward a more stable structure dependent on external catalysts such as crude trends and geopolitical cues.

The week ended with gains in benchmark indices, extending the uptrend for a second week supported by improved global risk appetite and optimism over a potential US-Iran peace agreement.

The Nifty and Sensex rose over one percent each, while broader markets outperformed despite intermittent volatility during the week.

Crude oil eased earlier due to temporary shipping relief through the Strait of Hormuz before stabilizing at higher levels, while foreign investors showed early signs of stabilisation though weekly flows remained slightly negative.

Domestic institutional investors turned net sellers in late sessions due to profit booking, while technical charts show consolidation with resistance near recent highs and support at lower levels.

Sectorally, energy and metals are expected to outperform, while macro data including infrastructure output and PMI readings will guide near-term sentiment and growth outlook for markets.

Markets are expected to remain range bound in the near term, with investors watching global developments and crude oil trends for direction. Sustained foreign inflows and continued domestic support will be crucial for maintaining momentum. Analysts believe that a decisive breakout above key resistance levels could trigger a stronger rally in equities, while failure to hold support may lead to renewed consolidation. Portfolio strategies are likely to favor large cap quality stocks with selective participation in broader market segments. Overall sentiment remains cautiously optimistic, supported by improving global cues and stabilising macro conditions across major economies. Investors await fresh data releases for further confirmation of trend strength in coming sessions.

# WHERE THE IRAN-ISRAEL WAR IS HEADING

## A Conflict That Has Reshaped the Middle East and the World

The guns have, for now, largely fallen quiet. A fragile two-week ceasefire, brokered by Pakistan and announced on April 8, 2026, temporarily halted what had become the most explosive military confrontation between the United States, Israel, and Iran in modern history. But with negotiations in Islamabad having already failed in their first round, with the truce expiring on April 21, and with both sides still far apart on every fundamental issue, the question on every strategist's desk is the same: where does this war go from here?

To answer that, it is necessary to understand how the world arrived at this dangerous threshold and what the forces pulling the conflict in each direction actually look like.

## From Proxy Conflict to Open War: The Road to February 28

For decades, Iran and Israel waged their enmity through proxies, assassinations, and cyberattacks. Iran built and sustained the so-called Axis of Resistance — a network of armed groups including Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and the Houthis in Yemen — all trained, funded, and directed, in varying degrees, from Tehran. Israel, meanwhile, conducted hundreds of covert strikes in Syria, targeted nuclear scientists inside Iran, and waged a relentless shadow war against the Islamic Republic's ambitions.

That era of managed hostility ended decisively in 2024, when Iran and Israel for the first time struck each other's soil openly and directly. In April 2024, Iran launched over 330 drones and missiles at Israel following an Israeli strike on its consulate in Damascus. In October of the same year, Iran fired between 180 and 200 missiles at Israel in retaliation for the killing of Hamas and Hezbollah leadership. Israel, in turn, launched retaliatory airstrikes on Iranian territory.

The true turning point came in June 2025, when Israel launched what became known as the Twelve-Day War a unilateral surprise strike on Iran that targeted nuclear facilities, missile factories, military infrastructure, and senior regime figures. The United States, under President Donald Trump, joined the campaign on June 22 and bombed three Iranian nuclear sites. A ceasefire was brokered just 12 days later, but the strategic damage to Iran was severe. Its air defenses were significantly degraded, its nuclear program set back, and its regional allies Hezbollah and Hamas had already been substantially weakened by Israeli military operations.

Yet the Twelve-Day War solved nothing definitively. Iran retained stockpiles of highly enriched uranium in underground facilities that evaded destruction. The International Atomic Energy Agency, unable to conduct inspections, could no longer verify the status of Iran's nuclear program. Iran's enrichment "breakout time" the period required to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon was assessed by the Trump administration at just a few weeks.

Beneath the military dimension, Iran's economy was also in freefall. The Iranian currency had collapsed by December 2025. Protests erupted on December 28, spreading across the country in January 2026, in the largest civil unrest since the 1979 revolution. The regime responded with brutal force, killing tens of thousands of civilians in a crackdown that drew international condemnation.

Despite these pressures, indirect nuclear negotiations between the US and Iran were proceeding through February 2026, with Oman mediating.

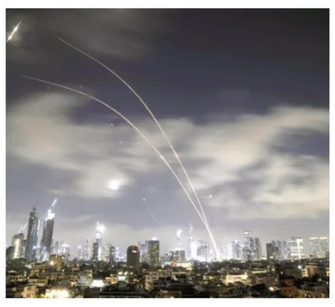
## THE FEBRUARY 28 STRIKES AND THEIR AFTERMATH

The assault that began on February 28 was unlike anything that had come before. Joint US-Israeli strikes targeted military installations, government sites, and regime leadership across at least 26 of Iran's 31 provinces. In the opening hours, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed, along with the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran's defense minister. Tehran was the most heavily targeted location.

Iran responded with an unprecedented retaliatory barrage. For the first time in history, Iran fired missiles and drones simultaneously at all six Gulf Cooperation Council countries Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAEstriking energy infrastructure, civilian airports, and commercial hubs. It also launched missiles at Israel and at US military bases across the region. Iranian forces moved to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which approximately 20 percent of the world's oil passes, sending global energy prices into a spiral. In March, Iran even launched two missiles targeting the US-UK military base at Diego Garcia, deep in the Indian Ocean a range no one had previously thought Iran capable of reaching.

The scale of Iran's retaliation surprised many analysts. Past Iranian strikes had been measured and calibrated for deterrence; this time, Tehran appeared to have chosen escalation. The war quickly drew in Hezbollah, which opened a new front in Lebanon. That conflict has killed more than 2,000 people in Lebanon alone. The Houthis, restrained at first, resumed limited attacks on Israel in late March.

By early April, more than 4,000 people had been killed across the broader conflict theater, overwhelmingly in Iran and Lebanon.



## THE NUCLEAR QUESTION: The War's Unresolved Core

Strip away all the tactical maneuvering and what remains at the heart of this war is Iran's nuclear program or, more precisely, uncertainty about it.

Trump first justified the February 28 strikes by claiming Iran had restarted its nuclear program and was developing missiles capable of striking the United States. US intelligence, however, reported no evidence of an active weapons program, and assessed Iran would need until 2035 to build such a missile if it chose to. The IAEA, for its part, has said that while Iran has an ambitious nuclear program, there was no confirmed evidence of an ongoing weapons program before the strikes.

The strikes themselves may have paradoxically worsened the nuclear risk.

## The Ceasefire: Fragile and Contested

Forty days into the war, with oil markets in turmoil, global shipping disrupted, and international pressure mounting, the United States and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire brokered by Pakistan. The announcement came on April 7 (April 8 local time in the Middle East). Iran committed to reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

All parties including Israel agreed to halt hostilities. The ceasefire immediately became mired in disputes. Israel rejected Pakistan's assertion that Lebanon was included in the truce, and within hours of the ceasefire announcement, Israeli forces launched their strongest wave of strikes on Lebanon since the war began hitting more than 100 targets in a single day. Iran responded by temporarily blocking the Strait of Hormuz again, blaming Israeli attacks on Lebanon. The Strait has become the conflict's most potent economic weapon, and its status has fluctuated almost daily. On April 12, US Vice President JD Vance led negotiations in Islamabad. The talks failed. The core sticking points were as intractable as ever: the United States demanded Iran abandon its nuclear enrichment program, surrender more than 400 kilograms of highly enriched uranium, and dismantle its major nuclear facilities. The US proposed a 20-year suspension of Iranian enrichment. Iran countered with a five-year suspension and a refusal to dismantle. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the two sides were "inches away" from an agreement when the US shifted to what he called "maximalism" and "moving goalposts."

As of April 19, a Pakistani delegation has landed in Tehran carrying a new message from Washington in an attempt to revive negotiations. The ceasefire is set to expire in two days. Iranian parliament speaker has touted "progress" in discussions, but the US naval blockade of Iranian ports which Iran says has driven it to reassert control of the Hormuz Strait remains in place and is itself a flashpoint. US destroyers have entered the Strait for the first time since the war began, ostensibly for minesweeping.

Iran has warned that any further US naval movement could constitute a ceasefire violation.

## CONCLUSION
### A Crisis Without Easy Exits

The Iran-Israel war of 2026 is not just a regional conflict it is a test of the international order's capacity to manage nuclear risk, resolve great-power competition, and constrain the ambitions of states that feel existentially threatened. As the ceasefire's expiration looms and Pakistani mediators shuttle between capitals, the margin for error grows smaller. Every additional day of fighting deepens the military, economic, and humanitarian damage. Every additional week without IAEA access to Iran's nuclear facilities increases uncertainty about what Iran is actually doing underground. The war's direction will be determined in the next few weeks by whether the two sides can bridge the gap on nuclear enrichment a gap that has defeated diplomats and destroyed agreements for over a decade. If they cannot, the world faces the grim prospect that this pause is merely an intermission, not an ending.

## THE REGIONAL RIPPLE EFFECTS

The war has dramatically reshaped Middle Eastern geopolitics in ways that will outlast any ceasefire. Iran struck all six GCC states in its retaliatory barrage — a historic first that has shattered the tacit understanding that had prevented Iran from targeting Gulf monarchies openly for decades. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which had been carefully cultivating closer ties with Tehran in recent years, now face an Iran that has demonstrated willingness to hit their oil infrastructure and residential areas. That trust, carefully built over years of diplomacy, has likely been set back by a generation. Lebanon faces catastrophic consequences. Over 2,000 people have been killed since the Lebanon front opened in early March. Hezbollah, already weakened by Israeli operations in 2024 and 2025, is now fighting a full-scale 2026 Lebanon war. The civilian toll is mounting and Lebanon's fragile institutions are struggling to cope. The Houthis remain a wild card. Having once stepped back, they resumed limited strikes on Israel in late March. IRGC officials have hinted that Iran may push its Houthi allies to blockade the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which would add another chokepoint to the shipping disruptions already caused by the Strait of Hormuz closure compounding the global economic fallout immensely.

## Where It Goes From Here: Three Possible Paths

The conflict now presents the world with three broad trajectories.The first is a negotiated settlement. The two-week ceasefire, however contested, has created a diplomatic opening. Iran's parliamentary speaker's mention of "progress" on April 19 suggests Tehran has not entirely closed the door.

If Pakistan's diplomatic shuttle succeeds in bridging the gap between Washington's demand for a 20-year enrichment suspension and Tehran's counteroffer of five years, a broader framework agreement becomes conceivable. But Iran's deep mistrust of the US rooted in Trump's 2018 withdrawal from the JCPOA and the launching of this very war during ongoing negotiations makes any durable deal extremely difficult to close.

The second is prolonged low-intensity conflict. If the ceasefire expires without renewal and full-scale fighting resumes, both sides face enormous costs. Iran's economy, already devastated by sanctions and the currency collapse, cannot sustain a prolonged exchange with the world's most powerful military. But Iran's leadership has shown repeatedly that it is willing to absorb enormous pain to avoid what it perceives as capitulation. A grinding war of attrition featuring continued strikes, proxy escalation in Lebanon and Yemen, shipping disruptions, and asymmetric naval pressure could persist for months.

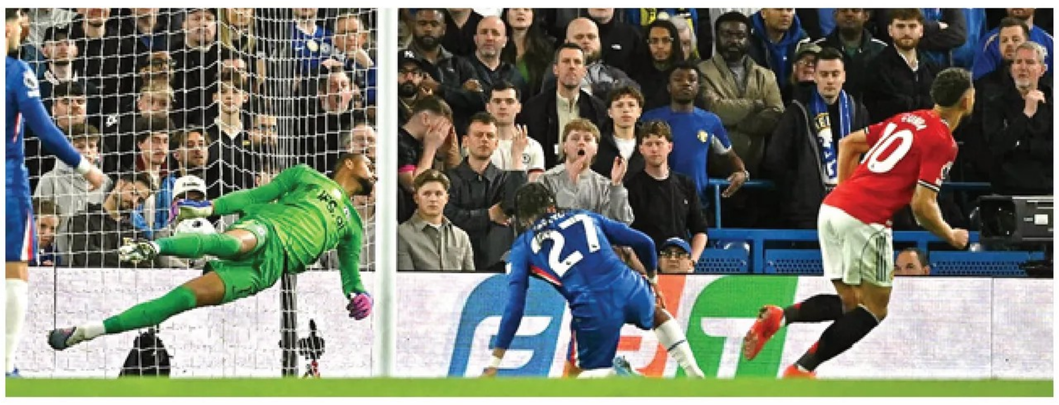
**The third is the worst-case scenario:** an uncontrolled escalation that produces wider regional war or, in the most extreme reading, an Iranian decision to cross the nuclear threshold as the regime's last guarantee of survival.

The killing of Khamenei has removed the one figure capable of imposing centralized strategic discipline on Iran's many moving parts. Who speaks for Iran now the new supreme leader, the IRGC, the hard-line factions remains opaque, and that opacity is itself a source of dangerous unpredictability.

# Cunha Fires Man United Closer to Champions League, Chelsea Falter Again

## United boost top-five hopes as Chelsea slump deepens under mounting pressure

**LONDON**



Matheus Cunha struck the decisive goal as Manchester United edged past Chelsea 1-0, taking a significant step towards securing qualification for next season's UEFA Champions League.

The victory at Stamford Bridge strengthened United's grip on third place, opening a 10-point gap over sixth-placed Chelsea with only a handful of matches remaining. With the top five teams set to qualify for Europe's elite competition, the result placed United firmly on course to end their two-year absence from the Champions League.

In contrast, Chelsea's fourth consecutive league defeat left their hopes of qualification in tatters and intensified scrutiny on manager Liam Rosenior, who has endured a difficult start to his tenure. "We have to keep fighting," Rosenior said, acknowledging the growing pressure while urging his side to respond positively.

Despite missing several key players, United delivered a disciplined defensive performance under interim boss Michael Carrick. Forced to field a makeshift backline, including teenager Ayden Heaven, the visitors held firm to secure a crucial clean sheet. Carrick praised his side's resilience, describing the result as "massive" in the context of their campaign.

Chelsea, meanwhile, struggled in attack without injured top scorer Joao Pedro. Forward Liam Delap failed to capitalise on his opportunity, while Enzo Fernandez came closest to scoring with a curling effort that narrowly missed the target. The decisive moment came just before half-time when Cunha finished clinically from an assist by Bruno Fernandes, who registered his 18th league assist of the season.

Chelsea improved after the break and created chances through Delap and Moises Caicedo, but were unable to find an equaliser.

The final whistle was met with boos from the home crowd, reflecting growing frustration. With their Champions League hopes fading, Chelsea now appear destined for a place in the Europa League at best next season.

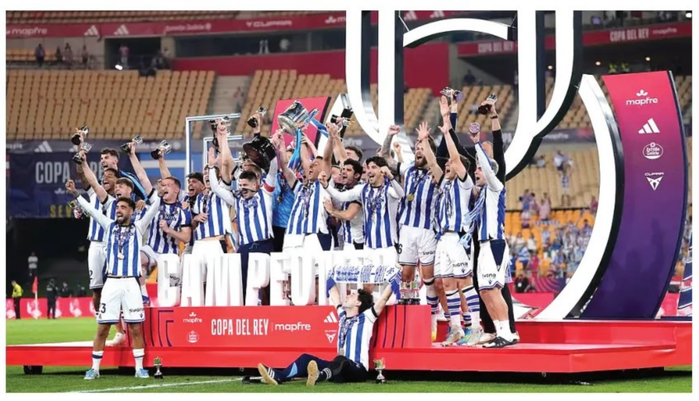
## Full-Time Doctor, Marathon Star: Kartik Karkera Chases Asian Games Gold

**NEW DELHI**

Kartik Karkera is redefining boundaries by pursuing two demanding careers simultaneously — as an orthopedic doctor and one of India's fastest emerging marathon runners — with his sights firmly set on Asian Games gold.

The 28-year-old, currently based in Nashik, has rapidly risen in India's long-distance running circuit, winning both the Mumbai and Delhi marathons. His personal best of 2:13:10 places him among the country's elite and below the qualifying standard set by the Athletics Federation of India for the Asian Games.

Karkera's journey has been anything but conventional. After moving to Russia in 2016 to pursue an MBBS degree, he spent nearly eight years completing his medical education, including a postgraduate degree in orthopaedics. During this time, running remained a personal passion, gradually evolving into a professional pursuit — particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when he trained relentlessly on a 400m track.\ Under the guidance of Yuriy Borzakovskiy, Karkera honed his skills and began competing at a higher level. His performances in Russia, including a strong showing in the Moscow Half Marathon, laid the foundation for his return to India as a serious contender.



## Sociedad Triumph on Penalties, Matarazzo Clinches First Title in Copa del Rey Final

**SEVILLE**

Real Sociedad defeated Atletico Madrid in a dramatic penalty shootout to win the Copa del Rey, handing coach Pellegrino Matarazzo the first major title of his career.

The final ended 2-2 after extra time before Sociedad held their nerve to win 4-3 on penalties. Goalkeeper Unai Marrero emerged as the hero, saving spot-kicks from Alexander Sorloth and Julian Alvarez, while Pablo Marin converted the decisive penalty.

Sociedad made a sensational start, scoring just 14 seconds after kickoff through Ander Barrenetxea — the fastest goal ever recorded in a Copa del Rey final. The move involved only three touches before the winger headed home, catching Atletico's defence off guard.

Atletico responded through Ademola Lookman in the 19th minute, but Sociedad regained the lead just before half-time when Mikel Oyarzabal converted a penalty after a foul by goalkeeper Juan Musso.The contest remained finely balanced, with Julian Alvarez levelling the score late in regulation time. Both sides had chances in extra time, including efforts that struck the woodwork, but neither could find a winner.

In the shootout, Marrero's composure proved decisive as Sociedad secured a memorable victory. "It has been an unbelievable journey," said Matarazzo, who took charge of the club in December when they were hovering just above the relegation zone. Within four months, he guided the Basque side to silverware and a strong league position.

Atletico manager Diego Simeone acknowledged his side's missed opportunities but praised Sociedad's clinical edge. The defeat marked a bitter blow for Atletico, who will now shift focus to their upcoming Champions League semifinal.

For Sociedad, the triumph capped a remarkable turnaround and signalled the start of a promising new era under Matarazzo's leadership.

## Gnabry Injury Blow for Bayern, World Cup Hopes Hang in Balance

**MUNICH**

Serge Gnabry is likely to miss the remainder of the season after suffering a serious injury, dealing a major setback to Bayern Munich and casting doubt over his participation in the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026.

The German forward sustained a tear in the adductor muscle of his right thigh, with Bayern confirming he will be sidelined for an extended period. While the club did not specify an exact recovery timeline, the nature of the injury suggests Gnabry could miss all remaining fixtures of the season.

His absence comes at a crucial juncture for Bayern, who are in contention for multiple trophies. The club is on the verge of securing the Bundesliga title and remains in the hunt in both domestic and European competitions.

They are set to face VfB Stuttgart in the league, followed by a German Cup semifinal against Bayer Leverkusen, before turning their focus to a high-stakes Champions League semifinal clash with Paris Saint-Germain.

Gnabry has been an important contributor this season, scoring eight goals and providing seven assists as Bayern continued their attacking dominance, including a record-breaking goal tally in the Bundesliga.

His pace, versatility, and experience have made him a key figure in the squad.

The injury also raises significant concerns for Germany ahead of the World Cup. Gnabry has been a regular under national team coach Julian Nagelsmann, starting every World Cup qualifier and featuring prominently in recent friendlies.

His consistent selection indicated he was firmly part of Germany's plans for the tournament set to be held across Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

With limited time to recover, Gnabry now faces a race against fitness to be ready for the global showpiece.

For Bayern, his absence will test squad depth during a decisive phase, while for Germany, it could mean rethinking attacking options if the experienced forward fails to return in time.

## Warm Welcome for Vaishali After Historic Candidates Triumph

**CHENNAI**

R Vaishali received a rousing welcome on her return home after clinching the Women's Candidates title, marking a historic milestone in her chess career. The 24-year-old arrived at the Chennai International Airport shortly after midnight on Sunday, days after her dramatic victory in Paphos.

Vaishali secured the title with a crucial final-round win over Kateryna Lagno, capping an intense and closely contested tournament. Speaking after her arrival, she described the event as "very close and unpredictable," adding that it could have gone either way until the final moments.

A large crowd of family members, friends, and enthusiastic young fans gathered at the terminal to welcome the champion. Around 30 schoolchildren waited patiently with banners and flowers, celebrating her achievement as she emerged from the arrivals gate. The emotional highlight came when Vaishali reunited with her father, Ramesh Babu, sharing a warm embrace before joining well-wishers.

Amid the celebrations, Vaishali cut a cake themed around a chessboard, symbolising her triumph. Reflecting on her journey, she admitted that the tournament had been mentally demanding. She noted that losing a game to Zhu Jiner midway through the event unexpectedly eased the pressure of leading, allowing her to refocus for the final rounds.

"It's a long and gruelling tournament. You have to stay focused until the very end," she said, describing the experience as a valuable learning phase in her career.

Vaishali's victory has earned her a place in the upcoming Women's World Championship, where she will challenge reigning champion Ju Wenjun. The achievement also strengthens India's presence on the global chess stage, alongside Gukesh Dommaraju in the open category.

## *India Hockey at Crossroads: World Cup Glory or Olympic Qualification Priority?*

**BENGALURU**

India's men's and women's hockey teams face a crucial strategic dilemma as they prepare for a packed international calendar, with decisions likely to shape their future on the global stage.

The twin challenges of the upcoming World Cup in Europe and the Asian Games in Japan have placed Hockey India and team management in a difficult position — whether to prioritise global glory or secure a direct berth for the 2028 Olympics.

Both teams will compete in the World Cup in the Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30, before heading to Japan for the Asian Games from September 19 to October 4. The tight 18-day turnaround, coupled with stark differences in weather, travel, and competition intensity, has sparked debate over squad selection and player workload.

Historically, India's World Cup success has been limited, with the men's team last winning the title in 1975 and the women's best finish being fourth in 1974. In contrast, the Asian Games offer a more realistic medal opportunity, with the added incentive of direct Olympic qualification for gold medallists.

The Sports Ministry has reportedly suggested fielding second-string squads at the World Cup while deploying full-strength teams at the Asian Games. However, head coaches Craig Fulton and Sjoerd Marijne have indicated a preference for playing their best players in both tournaments.

Former India drag-flicker VR Raghunath believes the challenge is more mental than physical, pointing out that modern players are better conditioned to handle intense schedules. He cited India's 2014 campaign, where the team performed strongly in back-to-back events, as evidence that success is possible with proper management.

Echoing a note of caution, former captain MM Somaya stressed that insufficient recovery time in similar situations in the past had affected performance, underscoring the need for careful planning.

Ultimately, the decision may hinge on player fitness, form, and feedback, alongside strategic priorities. With support staff expected to play a key role in managing fatigue and preparation, the coming months will be critical.

As India eyes both podium finishes and Olympic qualification, striking the right balance remains the ultimate test.

## Top Indian Athletes to Undergo DNA Testing Under AFI's Project GENESIS

**BENGALURU**

In a significant step towards integrating advanced sports science, top Indian athletes are set to undergo DNA testing under Project GENESIS, an initiative launched by the Athletics Federation of India. The proposal, approved during the federation's annual general meeting in Kohima earlier this month, is aimed at enhancing injury prevention and performance optimisation.

According to AFI officials, the programme is purely research-driven and will focus on building a scientific database tailored to Indian athletes. AFI spokesperson Adille Sumariwalla emphasised that the testing will remain confidential and is not intended for talent identification. Instead, the data collected will help understand muscle composition, physiological traits, and body structure.

The federation believes such insights can play a crucial role in designing personalised training programmes, improving recovery strategies, and reducing injury risks. Sumariwalla pointed out that most existing global research is based on Western populations, highlighting the lack of India-specific genetic data in sports science. Project GENESIS — Genomics for Elite Sports Integrated System — aims to bridge this gap through ethical and evidence-based practices.

Meanwhile, selection decisions for the upcoming World Athletics Relays have sparked debate. Among Karnataka's leading sprinters, only SS Sneha secured a place in the Indian squad for the event in Botswana. Notably absent were prominent names such as Manikanta Hoblidhar, Unnathi Aiyappa, MR Poovamma, and GK Vijayakumari. While Manikanta's omission was attributed to a recent muscle injury, the exclusion of experienced quartermilers Poovamma and Vijayakumari raised eyebrows, especially as selected athletes like Kumari Saloni and Ansa Babu have recorded slower timings this season.

# IPL 2026: Ajinkya Rahane Relieved as KKR End Losing Streak

KKR skipper finds humour after tense win, credits teammates for turnaround effort

**NEW DELHI**

Ajinkya Rahane expressed relief and a touch of humour after Kolkata Knight Riders secured their first win of IPL 2026, joking that he finally got "five extra minutes" on the field following the victory over Rajasthan Royals.

Having endured a string of defeats earlier in the season, Rahane noted that he was often among the first players back in the dressing room for post-match interviews. "First of all, really happy to be here. I got five extra minutes after the game," he quipped, reflecting the team's long-awaited turnaround.

The KKR skipper was quick to credit key performers, especially Rinku Singh, whose unbeaten 53 anchored the chase, and Varun Chakaravarthy, who returned to form with figures of 3/14. Rahane also praised Anukul Roy for his crucial support during the match-winning partnership.

"Really happy for Rinku, Anukul and Varun. They've been working hard, and it's good to see them deliver under pressure," Rahane said, acknowledging both the individual efforts and the team's resilience.

Reflecting on the chase, Rahane offered a measured view on modern batting approaches, suggesting that strike rate can sometimes be overrated. He emphasised the importance of rotating the strike and building partnerships, especially on challenging pitches.

"On wickets like this, it's about singles and doubles, not just big hits," he said, adding that the team had learned from recent mistakes.

With a five-day break before their next match, Rahane stressed the need for honest reflection and improved communication within the squad as KKR look to build momentum in the tournament.

# RCB Scripted History with 100th Home Match at Chinnaswamy

Bengaluru franchise reached milestone, celebrating legacy of iconic matches and moments

**BENGALURU**

Royal Challengers Bengaluru scripted history in the Indian Premier League 2026 by becoming the first team to play 100 matches at a single home venue when they faced Delhi Capitals at the iconic M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday.

The milestone coincided with a significant anniversary, marking 19 years since the IPL began at the same venue. On that opening night, Brendon McCullum had delivered a historic 158 for Kolkata Knight Riders against RCB, setting the tone for a tournament that transformed cricket in India. RCB, featuring stars like Rahul Dravid, Jacques Kallis, and a young Virat Kohli, were bowled out for just 82 — still their lowest total at the venue.Over the years, the Chinnaswamy Stadium witnessed numerous unforgettable moments. Among the most iconic was Chris Gayle's unbeaten 175 in 2013 against Pune Warriors India, which powered RCB to a staggering 263 — a record IPL total that stood for over a decade. Gayle's 30-ball century in that match remained the fastest in league history.In 100 matches at the venue, RCB recorded 48 wins and 46 losses, along with one tied game, underlining their strong connection with their home ground. The stadium had also been a stage for batting brilliance from legends.

## Klaasen Stresses Responsibility Over Strike Rate in Tough Situations

**HYDERABAD**

Heinrich Klaasen underlined the importance of maturity and responsibility in pressure situations after guiding Sunrisers Hyderabad to a narrow win over Chennai Super Kings in the ongoing Indian Premier League 2026.Klaasen's composed 59 off 39 balls proved crucial as SRH posted a competitive total, eventually securing a 10-run victory. Walking in after a flurry of early wickets, the South African batter steadied the innings and ensured momentum was maintained through the middle overs following Abhishek Sharma's explosive start.Despite consistent contributions this season, Klaasen's strike rate — currently at 144.39 — has drawn scrutiny, especially given his previous campaigns where he scored at over 170. His relatively cautious starts have also been noted, but the wicketkeeper-batter made it clear that his role often demands adaptability rather than aggression from the outset."I have been coming in at situations where we have lost four wickets in one or two overs. So I cannot go hard right from the start. I need to get the job done," Klaasen said after the match. He emphasised that anchoring the innings and guiding the team out of difficult phases remained his primary responsibility."In difficult situations, you have to take responsibility and be mature. We get paid to do the job and I don't care about strike rate. I know there has been a lot said about it this season, but I have been putting the team.

*CSK captain struggles for form as Ashwin questions approach after SRH loss*

## Ashwin Says Ruturaj's Mind 'Cluttered' Amid Lean Patch

**NEW DELHI**

Former India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has raised concerns over Ruturaj Gaikwad's mindset, suggesting the Chennai Super Kings skipper appears mentally cluttered during a difficult run in the ongoing Indian Premier League 2026.

Gaikwad, who has managed just 82 runs in six matches this season, endured another disappointing outing against Sunrisers Hyderabad, where CSK fell short by 10 runs while chasing 195. Despite a blazing 13-ball 30 from youngster Ayush Mhatre that set the tone early, the chase lost momentum as wickets fell at crucial intervals.

Ashwin felt the match presented an ideal opportunity for Gaikwad to rediscover his rhythm. "It was the best chance for him to score runs. He didn't need to take risks because of the way Mhatre started. It was right there for him to settle in and build an innings," he said during a broadcast discussion.

However, Gaikwad failed to capitalise and was dismissed after getting what Ashwin described as a "very good ball." The veteran spinner believes mounting pressure may be affecting the CSK captain's clarity at the crease. "I just feel he is under immense pressure, and his mind appears to be a bit cluttered," he added.

CSK's batting struggles were compounded by an impressive bowling display from SRH, led by Eshan Malinga, who claimed 3/29 in four overs. Earlier, half-centuries from Abhishek Sharma and Heinrich Klaasen powered Hyderabad to a competitive 194/9.

Meanwhile, SRH bowling coach Varun Aaron backed young pacer Praful Hinge despite an expensive outing, calling him a long-term prospect.

Elsewhere, Delhi Capitals edged past Royal Challengers Bengaluru, thanks to a late flourish from David Miller, earning praise from Cheteshwar Pujara for his composure under pressure.

With form and confidence wavering, Gaikwad's resurgence remains key to CSK's campaign moving forward.

Punjab Kings (254/7) beat Lucknow Super Giants by 54 runs in the IPL 2026 match at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh PCA Stadium in Chandigarh on Sunday.

## Steyn Calls SRH Win Over CSK a Potential Turning Point

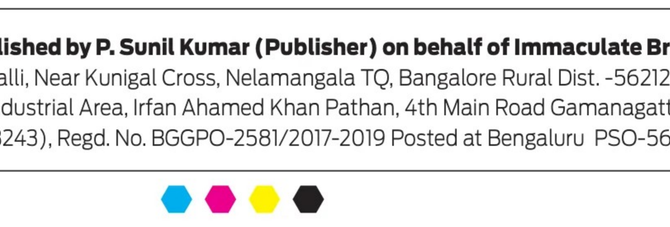
**NEW DELHI**

Former South Africa pace great Dale Steyn believed Sunrisers Hyderabad's victory over Chennai Super Kings could mark a crucial turning point in their Indian Premier League 2026 campaign, following a resurgence after a slow start.SRH secured a hard-fought 10-run win over CSK, registering back-to-back victories and gaining momentum in the league standings. The Hyderabad side posted a competitive 194/9, powered by impressive knocks from Abhishek Sharma and Heinrich Klaasen, before their bowlers delivered a disciplined performance to restrict CSK to 184/8.

*Speculation around Dhoni's return grows as CSK maintains silence on comeback*

## Will He, Won't He — The Dhoni Game Keeps Fans Guessing

**HYDERABAD**



The intrigue surrounding MS Dhoni's return reached fever pitch during the ongoing Indian Premier League 2026, with every Chennai Super Kings fixture dominated by one persistent question — will he play?

Ahead of their clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad, anticipation surged after CSK's social media hinted at Dhoni's arrival in Hyderabad. Fans expected a comeback, especially as the build-up gathered momentum across platforms. However, at the training session, the 44-year-old maintained a low profile, engaging only in light drills and a casual game of foot-volleyball alongside teammates, including Sanju Samson and Sarfaraz Khan.

Head coach Stephen Fleming offered little clarity, sticking to the familiar line that Dhoni was "progressing well" in his recovery. The ambiguity only deepened the suspense surrounding his availability.

Just when it seemed the day would pass without any concrete update, a late development reignited excitement. As the squad concluded training at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Dhoni reappeared in full batting gear. Facing side-arm throwdowns, he displayed glimpses of vintage form, launching towering shots and even executing his trademark helicopter shot with ease.The brief yet electrifying session was enough to set off a wave of optimism among fans. By matchday, the conversation had shifted from whether he would feature to how much game time he might get.

However, the anticipation proved short-lived. When the team sheets were announced at the toss, Dhoni's name was missing — not only from the playing XI but also from the list of impact substitutes.The development reset expectations and prolonged the uncertainty around his return. For fans and followers of the game, the Dhoni saga continued to oscillate between hope and doubt.As CSK's campaign progressed, the question remained unanswered — when would Dhoni finally return, or would the wait continue indefinitely?

## Agarkar Retained as Chief Selector as BCCI Renews Contract for Year

**NEW DELHI**

Ajit Agarkar will continue as chairman of India's senior selection committee after the Board of Control for Cricket in India renewed his contract for another year, prioritising stability ahead of the 2027 ODI World Cup.

The decision, widely anticipated within cricketing circles, ensures continuity at the helm of the selection panel during a crucial transition phase for Indian cricket. Agarkar, who took charge in 2023, has overseen a period marked by both success and significant restructuring within the national side.



Under his leadership, India reached four ICC tournament finals between October 2023 and March 2026, emerging victorious in three of them — including two T20 World Cup titles and one ICC Champions Trophy. These achievements played a key role in the board's decision to retain him for a fourth year.

A senior BCCI source clarified that Agarkar did not actively seek an extension, noting that selectors are permitted to serve up to four years in either junior or senior panels. The current move is therefore classified as a contract renewal rather than an extension.Agarkar's tenure has been defined by several bold and often difficult decisions. The selection committee oversaw the Test retirements of stalwarts Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, both of which were described as personal choices but carried significant implications for the team's future direction. Additionally, the panel initiated the gradual phasing out of experienced pacer Mohammed Shami from international cricket.

The committee also demonstrated a willingness to back form over reputation. One of its notable calls included leaving out Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill from the T20 World Cup squad, instead opting for in-form wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan.

Sources close to Agarkar indicated that he preferred to let his performance speak for itself rather than lobby for a continuation. The BCCI's decision reflects confidence in his leadership and strategic vision.With a major global tournament on the horizon, Agarkar's continued presence is expected to provide consistency as India shapes its squad for future challenges.

## SHREYAS IYER

Sets Sights on Trophy, Emphasises Present-Focused Approach

**MUMBAI**

Shreyas Iyer made it clear that his primary mission in the Indian Premier League 2026 is to lift the trophy with Punjab Kings, while stressing the importance of staying grounded in the present to achieve long-term success.

Having narrowly missed out on the title in the previous season, Iyer has returned with renewed determination and a fresh mindset. Speaking about his approach, the PBKS skipper said that focusing on the present moment helps maintain control and clarity on the field. "The mission is to lift the trophy. But the more you stay in the present, the more you stay in control," he said, adding that he encourages his teammates to adopt the same philosophy. Iyer highlighted that the team's focus is on constant improvement rather than dwelling on past results or looking too far ahead.

"We just want to improve each day and make sure we put our best foot forward. When everything comes together and that synergy builds, everything falls into place," he noted.Reflecting on his journey with Punjab Kings, Iyer spoke about embracing the nickname 'Sarpanch', a title given to him by teammates. Initially unsure of its meaning, he later understood it symbolised leadership and responsibility — something he has grown into during his time with the franchise. The captain also revisited a memorable knock from the previous season, where he fell short of a century in his debut match for PBKS.

**City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd.,** No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.